HAROLD THE EXILE.

VOL. II.

HAROLD THE EXILE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
Fond of each gentle and each dreadful scene.
In darkness and in storm he found delight:
Nor less than when on ocean wave serene
The southern sun diffused his dazzling sheen.
Even sad vicissitude amused his soul:
And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
A sigh, a tear so sweet, he wished not to controul.

VOL. II.

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HAROLD THE EXILE.

CHAP. XIII.

THE Earl of Marchmont was descended from an ancient and noble family, whose ancestors boasted their origin from a mighty line of monarchs, alike celebrated for their skill in council and their exploits in the field, at that period of English history when the wisdom of an Alfred framed a code of legislature, which has served as a model to succeeding princes, and revived the dying flame of learning in a barbarous and unlettered age, by his munificence and example.

But in illustrious families, as well as in others, all the members are not alike destined to make a conspicuous figure on the great theatre of life; and the noble earl in question, was not particularly distinguished for the depth or brilliancy of his intellectual endowments. He possessed, however, many estimable qualities, was friendly, generous and hospitable in his disposition, an affectionate son, a considerate master, and a devoted husband.

Sincere in his attachments, and unbounded in his confidence to those he loved, the Earl of Marchmont would have been happy and respected, had fortune placed him in a private station, or his destiny united him to a partner more deserving of his worth; but his elevated rank rendered those defects conspicuous which had probably passed unnoticed in a more obscure situation, and she, whom he had selected for his companion through the rough and checkered journey of life.

was, unfortunately, not calculated to smooth the thorny path, or sustain the footsteps of her partner in a progress of difficulty and danger.

Never, perhaps, had indulgent nature more profusely lavished her most admired endowments on any being, than on Albina, Countess of Marchmont; and, matchless as she was in personal attractions, she was still more conspicuous for a fascination of manners almost unparalleled; of manners which diffused a thousand nameless charms over every look and action, and, by a kind of sorcery, subdued all hearts to herself. In her, "defect became perfection," and in the language of the poet—

> She's outwardly
> All that bewitches sense, all that entices,
> Nor is it in our virtue to uncharm it.

But nature when she so lavishly adorned the casket, neglected to furnish it with a mind as lovely. Albina lived only to

vanity and pleasure. The desire of universal admiration, early infused into her heart, had deadened its nobler feelings, and her every action and sentiment was only a refined and exquisite species of coquetry, by which she secured her empire over those she wished to conquer. Raised by her beauty from a comparatively obscure situation, to the rank she now held in society, the ties of gratitude which should have bound her to the man to whose misplaced affection she was indebted for this elevation, had no power over a mind so absorbed in selfish feelings, and she secretly regarded her husband with the most sovereign contempt Policy, however, forbade an open expression of this opinion ; Albina was, in appearance at least, the affectionate wife and tender mother, and her beauty, her endearments, her sweetness of manners, gave her an unbounded influence over the mind of the deluded Lord Marchmont, who, under the illusion of an habi-

tual infatuation, believed her all perfection, and turned a deaf ear to the insinuations of those friends whose cooler judgment had been able to discern some few flaws in this prodigy of nature's workmanship.

The power possessed by Lady Marchmont over her idolizing husband, was frequently exerted for the most baleful purposes. Her love of show, of dissipation, and of expence, led him into extravagances equally incompatible with his inclinations and his fortune, which, ample as it was, would not support the demands continually made upon it. His affairs became involved, his credit injured, and retrenchment, which offered the most effectual means of shunning the approaching ruin, was strenuously opposed by Lady Marchmont, whose vanity could not brook the idea of making a less distinguished figure than she had formerly done, and her too easy and infatuated lord yielded to arguments which yet did

not convince him. In pursuance of this ruinous plan, every thing wore the same aspect in the mansion of Lord Marchmont. The same entertainments were given, the same course of thoughtless dissipation pursued, and the same sums squandered in the most puerile and expensive follies.

But the evil hour though delayed for a time by various expedients, could not be always evaded, and the stroke he had so long foreseen, fell with accumulated violence on the head of the devoted earl, who, with a comparatively scanty income retired with his family to the continent, to which he was principally induced by the solicitations of Albina; who sickened at the idea of continuing in a country where she must relinquish all her former splendors for what she considered insignificance and obscurity.

During her career of gaiety, the purity of Lady Marchmont's fame had not escaped unsullied by suspicion, and

though it was suspicion only, it had been so general as to produce a decided alteration in the conduct of those whose nicety of principle would not allow them to tolerate vice because it happened to be graced with a coronet. This was another inducement for her ladyship to desire a temporary removal from England; for relying on the usual versatility of the human mind, she flattered herself that her former imprudences would be forgotten during her absence, more especially as the suspicions attached to her conduct were not sanctioned by the credence of her lord, who imputed to calumny alone every thing alledged against his adored Albina.

Her residence, therefore, in Sicily, was by no means disagreeable to the latter, who contrived to embellish her seclusion by the charms of society, as well as those of nature. She was still the gayest of the gay when her purposes did not require the assumption of a different cha-

racter, and her beauty, her fascinations, and her accomplishments drew around her an admiring circle, of which she was the presiding goddess. Most of the English residents in Messina, were her occasional visitors, and Berrington was no stranger to the residence of Lady Marchmont at the *Villa di Marino*, when he conducted Harold hither, though he certainly was a little surprised at meeting her so unexpectedly in the cemetery.

In the principal incident of the tale which he related to his friend, Berrington had not deviated from the truth. Albina Sidney was the object of his first affections, at a period when his feelings were not corrupted, and his mind was uncontaminated by the influence of bad example. Motives of an interested nature, and the ascendancy of his friends, combined to tear him from her, and they met no more till Albina was become the wife of the Earl of Marchmont. The meeting was unfortunate for both parties; Berrington

was young and handsome, his manners insinuating, his attachment ardent, and the virtue of Albina, who was some years older than himself, was not proof against the vows of this mere boy, whom her charms had captivated.

The reign of passion was long since gone by, and the once tender adorer of Albina would have discovered the proximity of her abode with great indifference, had it not promised, from his intimate knowledge of her character, to promote his own views against the peace and honour of his unsuspecting friend; or should he ultimately fail of entangling Harold in the syren's chains, he still hoped to put such a face upon the matter as effectually to ruin him in the opinion of Gabrielle, whose mind was but too well prepared for the reception of such a tale by his artful insinuations since his departure from England, and the supposed neglect and silence of Harold.

Lady Marchmont was yet but little

more than thirty, her personal graces were unimpaired, and her manners daily acquiring new powers of attraction from a more mature knowledge of, and intercourse with the world. Harold was young, beautiful, of an ardent disposition and a warmth of imagination, which rendered him doubly liable to be seduced into error. Berrington believed it was scarcely possible that he should escape the snare now spread for him, and with a few hints to Lady Marchmont on the general character of his friend, and a tale calculated to interest the susceptible feelings of Harold, he introduced the parties to each other, and left to fortune the event.

It would have been hardly possible for Berrington to have chosen a more able and willing auxiliary, than her he had thus selected. At their first interview, Albina was deeply struck with the person and manners of the young and elegant Harold. Of his promising and uncommon

talents she had before heard, and her pride and vanity would be equally gratified by seeing him included in the list of those who had worn her chains. The difficulty of the conquest (for difficult she was assured it would prove,) only augmented the desire of triumph, and all the sorceries and allurements of one of the most perfect and practised syrens of the age were preparing against the heart of the inexperienced Harold, who, occupied only with an image, which, under every variation of feeling and circumstance he still cherished with enthusiastic fondness, was unconscious of the danger which awaited him.

CHAP. XIV.

A FEW days after their first introduction at the Villa di Marino, our hero and his friend received an invitation to an entertaiment given by Lady Marchmont, in honour of her lord's birth-day. Not that *his* birth-day, or that of all his race, would have had the power of exciting any emotion in her ladyship's feelings; but these opportunities enabled her, under an appearance of delicate attention towards her husband, to indulge her own love of amusement, certain of meeting no opposition from him, who would consider himself flattered by such marks of her regard and attention.

The present entertainment was intended to be unusually splendid—and all the attractions of illuminated gardens, beautiful women, and music that breathed the very soul of love and harmony, were com-

bined to charm the senses, and soften the heart of the spectator into a kind of intoxicating pleasure.

It was late before Harold and Berrington arrived at the villa, and the elegant suite of apartments, which had been fitted up for the occasion, were almost deserted by the company, who were dispersed in various groups through the extensive gardens, dancing, or walking, as was most congenial to their inclinations.

In the principal saloon a few stragglers had formed themselves into parties for cassino, among whom they found the earl, who welcomed them with his accustomed cordiality; and their inquiry after Lady Marchmont was prevented by the entrance of her ladyship from the gardens, accompanied by several of her fair guests, and presenting, in her own person; such a dazzling display of beauty, as absolutely startled Harold; who, lovely as he had thought her at their first interview, was not prepared to behold so brilliant an

assemblage of charms, as those he now witnessed with an emotion not compounded purely of admiration. Her ladyship's dress, which consisted of a robe of blond lace over white satin, perfectly displayed the exquisite proportions of her faultless form ; and her bosom, white as the pearls that adorned it, was only shaded by a bouquet of flowers, corresponding with those which enwreathed the ringlets of her luxuriant hair.

Harold, so long accustomed to gaze with chastened delight on the delicately-veiled form of the lovely Gabrielle, beheld, with a confused and shrinking glance, the lavish display of beauty in the figure before him ; but, when the silvery tones of the syren's voice stole upon his ear, as she expressed her pleasure at again beholding them at the Villa di Marino, the momentary sensation of disgust vanished, and was imputed to English prejudices, not yet reconciled to the manners and habits of a foreign clime.

He did not then remember, that Gabrielle, a native of this very clime, was herself an example of the most undeviating and delicate modesty in her attire. But this was no time for reflection—Harold was called upon to join her ladyship's party in the gardens; and Berrington having offered his arm to a lady who accompanied Albina, the latter was left to the escort of our hero. In the gardens, whither they now proceeded, every thing wore an air of enchantment. The moon, mingling its soft and mellow light with the lustre of the variegated lamps—the fragrance diffused at every step, from innumerable flowers—the delicious warmth of the air, tempered at intervals by breezes, which had stolen the perfumes of the orange and myrtle groves, over which they passed—the gay groupes that paraded the gardens, and the strains of music, sometimes dying upon the ear with languishing cadence, at others, awakening the most animated feelings of

pleasure by their exhilarating harmony; all was calculated to lull every sense in sweet delirium. But the spirits of Lord Harold were not in their highest tone, and the raillery of Lady Marchmont, delicate as it was, did not serve to enliven them.

An invitation from the latter to join a group of waltzers, who were pursuing their favorite amusement beneath the shade of some acacias, recalled his before absorbed faculties; and, after a momentary hesitation, he followed the example of Berrington, who, on the first intimation of her ladyship's wishes, immediately led his fair companion to a set which had just formed.

Harold danced with that easy and unaffected elegance, which is less the result of culture than an innate perception of propriety and beauty, and his natural and acquired graces had never appeared to greater advantage than as he now led his lovely partner through the intricate mazes

of this national dance, in which, notwithstanding his plea of ignorance, in excuse of any deficiency on the present occasion, he acquitted himself to admiration.

Albina's dancing was the perfection of the art; and, conscious of her own superiority, she felt piqued and mortified that the united powers of her beauty and attractions should fail in their intended effect upon Harold, whose reserve, almost approaching to timidity, it was the aim of the enchantress to overcome.—"Is this man ice, or an ideot," she mentally exclaimed, as breathless, and fatigued she declared to her companion that she could dance no more. "Truly, indeed, was I informed, that Lord Harold would prove a conquest of no trifling difficulty. But he shall yet be subdued:" and, with a smile, which might have graced an angel, she requested him to accompany her to the house. Harold complied—and, having seen her ladyship seated at cassino, at her earnest solicitations, returned to

the gardens, where he soon met several persons who had been introduced to him at Messina, by whom he was again persuaded to join in the mazy dance, but his spirits were not in unison with the scene of gaiety, and he took the first opportunity of returning to the party in the saloon, when, as he approached the table where she sat, Lady Marchmont exclaimed, laughingly, "How, my lord, a truant so soon?"

"I do not feel disposed for dancing to-night," replied Harold, in a tone of voice expressive of his secret sadness.

"What say you, then, to a game of cassino? If you are disposed to play, I can find you a partner; or, if you prefer staying till this hand is out, I may, perhaps, have the pleasure myself."

"I will wait, by all means," replied Harold, bowing; and he amused himself with sauntering about the room, and surveying the different groups of players, till he was summoned by Lady March-

mont to join her party, where she contrived to detain him, till the company separated, which they did not do till a late hour.

The following day, Harold, whose mind was in that state of listlessness which is alike adverse to amusement or occupation, rode out alone, and, almost unconsciously, directed his course to the Villa di Marino. On arriving at the entrance of the park, he really felt surprised at finding himself there, but since he was so near, politeness, he thought, demanded an inquiry after the health of its inhabitants, and he proceeded forward to the house.

Lord Marchmont, who was walking on the lawn, which extended in front of the villa, was the first to perceive his approach, and hastened to meet him, while he exclaimed, as he shook his hand—"Now, this is really kind of you, my lord. thus to pay us a visit, without the ceremony of a formal invitation. You are

come very opportunely, I assure you; for Lady Marchmont has a little scheme in agitation to-day, which your assistance will improve vastly."

Harold replied, that he should be very happy to promote her ladyship's amusement by the best exertion of his abilities, and a servant having been called to take his horse, he was conducted by the earl to his lady. They found her in her boudoir, accompanied by two of her children, and busily employed in forming into wreaths a profusion of flowers which strewed the rich carpet of the apartment.

"Albina, my love," said Lord Marchmont, as he entered, "I have brought you a visitor, who will prove, I am sure, a welcome acquisition to our evening party. I dare say you can find some employment for his lordship's taste, in helping you to arrange these pretty gewgaws; and, in the mean time, I will go and give some directions concerning the vessel."

"We are to have a sailing party, this evening, my lord," said Lady Marchmont to Harold, after the earl had quitted the room, "as a long promised indulgence to these youngsters, pointing to the lovely boys that stood beside her, "and your presence will be no slight addition to our expected pleasure."

"Your ladyship is too condescending," replied Harold, gracefully bowing his thanks for the implied compliment.

"Not in the least," answered Lady Marchmont, laughing, "for I assure you, the motive is very selfish on my part. I mean to make you useful, and, as a proof of it, request your assistance in selecting the flowers for my garlands."

"And to what purpose will your ladyship apply these beautiful ornaments?" asked Harold, taking up one of the wreaths Lady Marchmont had finished.

"Oh, you shall know that hereafter. At present, your business is to help Albert to pick up those scattered roses.—

Albert, my dear, make room for Lord Harold to sit beside you."

"What, upon the carpet, mamma?" inquired the lovely boy.

"To be sure," exclaimed Harold, laughing, and flinging himself down between the children, who, delighted with their new companion, pursued their sweet and simple task with fresh alacrity under his directions; while her ladyship, as she entwined the flowers, presented to her by Harold, alternately conversed, or murmured a song, in tones whose sweetness declared the perfection of her vocal powers.

The wreaths were, at length, finished, and the children dispatched with them to Lewson, Lady Marchmont's woman, who had already received her ladyship's directions for their disposal. "These boys," she exclaimed, after they had quitted the room, "are half wild at the thought of their expected pleasure. It is a birthday treat of their father's, and for the last

ten days the house has been scarcely able to contain them."

"Happy age!" exclaimed Harold, involuntarily, "when every trifle may be converted into a pleasure."

"And does Lord Harold," gently demanded Lady Marchmont, "already lament the joys of childhood, at a period when youth offers all its attractions to his acceptance?"

Harold was silent—but his heightened colour, and the sigh that accompanied it, revealed to the penetrating Lady Marchmont his secret feelings. "Yes," she mentally ejaculated, "the heart of this foolish boy is no stranger to love; and, ere I can hope to inthrall him in new chains, I must unloose those by which he is now held."

The entrance of Lord Marchmont with some visitors, who had been invited to join the party, from Messina, here interrupted the conversation; and the carriages being announced, they set out on

their intended excursion. On arriving at the beach, which was distant about half a league from the villa, they found boats waiting to convey them to the vessel, which had been fitted up in the most elegant style for the occasion. An awning of green silk shaded the seats prepared for the reception of the party, festooned with the flowers her ladyship had entwined, which shed a delicious fragrance around. Wines, ices, fruits, and every species of refreshment, had been brought on board, and in a distant part of the vessel were stationed some of the earl's servants, with musical instruments, to enhance, by the power of harmony, the pleasures of the scene. Lady Marchmont herself, as she reclined beneath the waving canopy, with her two lovely boys on each side, seemed almost to realize the description of the poet—

"She lay, and leaned her cheek upon her hand,
And cast a look so languishingly sweet,
As if secure of all beholders' hearts,
Neglecting she could take them."

"But if she smiled,
A darting glory seemed to blaze abroad,
That men's admiring eyes were never wearied,
But hung upon the object.—*All for Love.*

The delightful serenity of the evening, the cool and fragrant breeze, which sighed among the sails of the vessel, and the glories of the setting sun, streaming in golden radiance along the waves, and tinging the clouds above them with a roseate hue, conspired to diffuse a corresponding emotion over the spirits of the party on board. Even the sprightly boys had foregone their prattle—Harold, too, gradually dropped an animated discussion he had been engaged in with their mother, and leaned pensively over the vessel's side; while the general silence was unbroken, save by the low-breathed and plaintive strains of the musicians, which added charms to stillness, and frequently elicited a half-suppressed sigh from the over-powered feelings of the hearers. The soft obscurity of twilight

was at length illumined by the moon rising in silvery splendor over the waves of the Mediterranean; and, as Harold watched her progress through the fleecy clouds that floated in the pure azure of the starry vault above them, he softly exclaimed, "How calm, how lovely is this scene!"

"Lovely indeed!" murmured a voice beside him. It was Lady Marchmont, who added, laughingly,

"In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise—in such a night,
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
And sighed his soul toward the Grecian camp,
Where Cressid lay that night."

"To what region of the world, my Lord Harold, have your thoughts been wandering this last hour?"

"I intreat your ladyship's pardon for my absence," replied Harold, with some degree of confusion; "but, in the lan-

guage of the bard you have just quoted,

"I'm never merry when I hear sweet music."

"What effect, then, my lord, would your spirits experience from an Italian love song in an hour and scene like the present."

"I should be most happy," answered Harold, in an insinuating accent, "if Lady Marchmont would put them to the trial, by favouring me with a display of those vocal powers of which I had so charming a specimen to day,"

"Certainly," returned her ladyship, carelessly, "if it will be any amusement." And ordering one of the servants to bring her a lute, she seated herself at a little distance from Harold, and, with an air of apparent negligence, began to play.

From the simplicity of the instrument she had chosen, the latter was led to expect no very brilliant display of musical talent in Lady Marchmont; but in this

selection Albina was influenced by a consciousness of the unrivalled powers of her own voice, which, assisted only by a simple staccato accompaniment, now poured its rich tide of harmony on the ear of the attentive Harold, who, though reluctantly, was compelled to acknowledge its magical effect by the emotions it produced.

Gabrielle Montgomery sang with all the perfection of natural talent, improved by the highest degree of scientific skill. Lady Marchmont, like a syren, whose every tone thrilled on the senses of her hearers with a witchery scarcely less dangerous than her lip's soft smile, or the spell which lurked in every glance of her blue and expressive eye, and while Harold silently listened to the enchantress, his imagination involuntarily drew a comparison between the being, who, like the fabled Armida, held the senses of those around her in enforced captivity, and she who, with the voice of a seraph, and the

expression of a St. Cecilia, had, in the hermitage of Llanivar so often charmed his fancy and elevated his soul by strains worthy of the pure and pious breast of her by whom they had been awakened.

Absorbed in the reflections to which this remembrance had given rise, Harold gradually became inattentive to surrounding objects. The song of Albina no longer vibrated on his ear, and he was only rouzed from his reverie by the latter abruptly telling him that the party were preparing to return to shore.

CHAP. XV.

On quitting the vessel an accident occurred which threatened to change the recent scene of gaiety into one of the deepest affliction; for as the eldest son of Lord Marchmont, regardless of his father's admonitions, was hurrying precipately down the ladder into the boat, his foot slipped, and before any one was aware of the danger, he was plunged into the foaming waves. A piercing shriek from Lady Marchmont first announced his perilous situation, and she was only withheld from springing after him by the firm grasp of Harold, who had just taken her hand to assist her into the boat. Without speaking, he hastily consigned her to the care of the first person that approached, and flinging off his coat, plunged into the water, and at the imminent hazard of being drawn by the force

of the current under the vessel, succeeded in rescuing the drowning boy (who had twice sunk) before the dismayed and horror-struck spectators had time to recover from their panic.

Lady Marchmont had fainted in the arms of her husband, who as Harold approached with his rescued child, grasped the hand of his generous preserver, exclaiming in broken accents—"Harold, my noble, gallant fellow! how shall I ever repay the inestimable service you have rendered us?"

"It is already repaid, my lord," replied Harold, pointing to the little Albert, who, recovering from his temporary insensibility, looked up smilingly in the face of his preserver. The cares of those about her had by this time recalled Lady Marchmont to herself, who was soon made acquainted with what had passed, and alternately clasped her darling to her breast, regardless of his

dripping condition, and bathed the hand of Harold with tears of *genuine* sensibility.

As our hero, as well as their son, was completely drenched through, the Earl and Countess were apprehensive of the consequences which might arise to them from remaining so long in their wet clothes, and as soon as they landed, the former was compelled to enter the first carriage, which drew up, accompanied by Albert and Lady Marchmont, who refused to quit her son. Scarcely a word was spoken during their rapid drive; for the latter still trembled at the danger which had menaced her favourite child, and Harold, languid from the effect of his recent exertions, did not feel disposed to interrupt the silence. On arriving at the Villa, Albert was consigned to the charge of his nurse, and his preserver having changed his dress, repaired to the supper room, where the rest of the party

had now assembled. The late accident, and the heroic conduct of Harold, furnished conversation for the remainder of the evening; and the encomiums lavished upon him almost disconcerted our hero, who saw nothing in the action but an exertion of common humanity, which did not appear deserving of such reiterated applause.

Harold passed the following day with his noble friends, who seemed at a loss sufficiently to testify their gratitude for his recent services, and on his quitting them to return to Messina, intreated him ever to consider the Villa di Marino as his home while he continued in Sicilly.

In consequence of this invitation, he became a frequent guest at the Villa, where he was always welcomed with smiles, and parted from with expressions of regret; and where the attractions of beauty, elegance, and chearful society were united to render his visits delightful. In Lord Marchmont, notwithstand-

ing Berrington's insinuations, he daily discovered new traits of a kind and generous disposition; and his frank and unassuming manners rendered him a truly pleasing companion. The children too, with whom he was becoming a great favourite, gained almost imperceptibly on his affections, and Albina herself appeared to him as one of the most charming and amiable of women.

Female society was in a manner necessary to the comfort of Harold, who felt all his cares disperse while gazing on the countenance of woman dressed in smiles, or listening to the soothing accents of her voice. From her observations of his character and sentiments, Lady Marchmont had learnt caution, and her conduct was marked by the most delicate sense of propriety, accompanied by those proofs of attention and partiality, which flatter without alarming the susceptible heart.

Every hour he passed in her society

augmented the admiration of Harold. His vanity was gratified by flatteries which would have charmed even "the cold dull ear" of a stoic, and the sadness which frequently lowered upon his brow, yielded to the magic of her witching voice. Albina perceived the influence she had obtained, and finally drew from him a full confession of every circumstance connected with his attachment to Miss Montgomery. The tale really interested her feelings, and had her vanity only been concerned, Lady Marchmont would now, perhaps, have relinquished her projected conquest; but, like the silly moth, she had fluttered near the flame till it had scorched her. A sentiment stronger than vanity impelled her on, and to its indulgence she meditated a sacrifice of every thing estimable in woman.

The attachment which Harold had avowed, excited but slight uneasiness in her mind; for though a stranger to the

deep laid plans of Berrington, she believed the woman by whom Harold was so unworthily treated, could feel for him no great degree of affection, and her own views were, she thought, likely to be promoted by the knowledge this confidence had given her of a heart, whose governing propensity certainly was not insensibility.

To a delicate mind, the being to whom it unbosoms its secret feelings, always becomes in some degree an object of tenderness; and the society of Lady Marchmont was more eagerly courted by Harold, after he had made her the confidant of those sorrows which she so well knew how to sooth. With her he conversed without restraint of his disappointed hopes and affections, and while her azure eye swam in tears, and her soft voice murmured in broken tones, her surprise that a woman thus supremely favoured, should cast away the blessing, Harold almost forgot his sorrows while thus

listening to consolation so sweetly bestowed.

Such was the dangerous situation of our hero at this period, and Berrington, who was informed of every proceeding of his deluded friend, secretly congratulated himself on the success of his nefarious designs, not doubting but he would eventually become a victim to the allurements of the enchantress into whose power he had been betrayed.

One morning as Harold was preparing for his usual ride to the Villa, Berrington hastily entered the apartment, exclaiming, "Ha! I am just in time, I see; I was fearful I should be too late to see you before you set out."

"What then have you to communicate?" inquired Harold; who saw intelligence written in every feature of his friend.

"Oh, nothing," replied the latter, "except to ask if you have any commands for England?

"By whom?"

"Myself. I have been appointed the bearer of important dispatches, and shall sail to-morrow if the wind is fair. I suppose Harold, you will not feel disposed to accompany me?"

"I am not prepared," answered his lordship, "for so sudden a departure; neither" added he, in an accent of bitterness, "have I any motive to desire it."

"True; but you have probably some commissions which I can take charge of?"

"I shall write to my mother, certainly."

"And to Miss Montgomery, I suppose?"

Harold was silent. Love and pride struggled for the ascendancy in his bosom; but the former at length prevailed, and he answered in a melancholy tone, "I scarcely know for what purpose I should address one who apparently considers me unworthy of a reply. I will write, however, since you seem to desire it, and I conjure you by the friendship existing between us, to see Gabrielle

yourself. Oh, Berrington! plead the cause of your unhappy friend with the woman he adores. Yes, spite of myself, I adore her, and my future happiness or misery must depend upon her will. I know she esteems you highly; exert then your influence in my behalf, and let Harold be indebted for his felicity to his friend."

Berrington promised every thing which he required, and while Harold prepared his letters, he rode over to take leave of the family at the Villa di Marino.

When he announced the purport of his visit, the ill disguised emotion of Lady Marchmont, who supposed Harold was to be the companion of his journey, revealed to the penetrating Berrington the impression which had been made by the latter, but he soon relieved her alarm by saying, "that he should consign his friend, Lord Harold, to the guidance of her ladyship till he returned to Sicily, which would probably be in the course of a

month or six weeks." The countenance of Lady Marchmont brightened at these words, and Berrington, after receiving repeated assurances of attention to his injunctions, departed from the Villa, satisfied that all things would succeed as he desired.

The adieus of our hero, and his treacherous confidant were marked on the one side by the expression of the most sincere regard and friendship, and on the other by an appearance of the most profound dissimulation, which was assumed to hide his real feelings. Buoyant with hope, and sanguine in expectation, Berrington commenced his voyage, while Harold, melancholy and desponding, returned to the solitude of his lonely dwelling, and to the dangerous society of the Villa di Marino.

CHAP. XVI.

For some time after Berrington's departure, Harold continued to sustain his spirits by the hopes awakened by their last conversation; day after day, however, passed on, without bringing any intelligence from his friends, and, as his safe arrival in England had been formally notified to the commanding officer, by whom he had been charged with dispatches for that country, his silence must consequently have its source in some other cause. His mother, too, seemed to have forgotten him; and Harold, in the bitterness of his feelings, accused his friends of having entirely effaced his image from their minds. All his conjectures were at length terminated by the arrival of a packet from Miss Montgomery, containing, to his inexpressible surprise, all his presents, and the letters formerly ad-

dressed to her, accompanied by the following epistle :—

"My Lord,

At the time when you honored me with the inclosed, I considered myself authorized in receiving them, by the approbation of our mutual friends, no less than from the nature of your lordship's avowed sentiments. Circumstances have since convinced me how much I was deceived in the estimate I then formed of felicity; and, in returning these evidences of a mistaken attachment, I voluntarily release your lordship from every engagement which has existed between us, and which can now be only a subject of indifference, if not of regret. My present conduct is the result of long and mature deliberation, and a full conviction, that the union we once anticipated would not be productive of happiness to either party.

"I will not deny but this resolution has cost me a severe struggle, and has only

been maintained by a principle of rectitude which no selfish feelings can shake. With my present sentiments, I never can become your wife; but your lordship will always have my best wishes for your happiness; and oh, Harold! I conjure you, by the memory of past days of love and innocence, seriously to reflect whether it is to be found in the course you are now pursuing.—May you yet pause, before it is too late, and at some future period, enjoy with a deserving object, that felicity you would never have tasted with G. MONTGOMERY."

A mist swam before the eyes of Harold as he perused this epistle, which, amidst its apparent ambiguity, conveyed to his appalled imagination the terrible conviction, that Gabrielle had relinquished him for ever. Again, and again he read it over, and each fresh perusal more strongly confirmed the agonizing fact.

The silent interpreters of his senti-

ments, which lay before him, the splendid testimonies of his tenderness, thus returned by the being on whom they had been lavished, all spoke tortures to his bleeding heart; and, hastily removing them from his sight, he ordered his horse, and rode over to the Villa di Marino.

He found Lady Marchmont alone, who on beholding his perturbed and agitated appearance, as he entered, involuntarily exclaimed,

"Gracious heaven! Harold, what has befallen you?" But he was at that moment unable to reply, and she repeated her question with increased alarm.

"Read this! Lady Marchmont," he at length said, in a frantic accent, presenting Gabrielle's letter to her ladyship, while he sunk into a chair beside her. She perused it in silence, and as she returned it to him, "You see," he resumed, "she has for ever abandoned me, without the plea of misconduct on my part, to justify so cruel a desertion. Oh! Lady

Marchmont, kind and sympathizing friend, do not deny me your pity, however you may condemn my weak attachment to this ungrateful woman."

"I do pity you, deeply, tenderly pity your unmerited wretchedness," answered Albina, in one of those syren tones, which she so well knew how to assume, and which operated as if by magic on the hearer's heart. Harold felt its influence, in calming the stormy passions which now agitated his bosom, and unconscious that the friendship professed by his wily confidant, was alloyed by any sentiment less pure and disinterested than his own, he earnestly implored her advice, to direct his conduct, under the painful and difficult circumstances in which he was now placed.

"Can you," said Albina, hesitatingly, "resolve to relinquish the object of this unfortunate attachment?"

"Never! never!" exclaimed Harold, with vehemence, "while life remains!

All my earthly happiness is centered in Gabrielle Montgomery, and nothing but her marriage with another, will ever make me relinquish the hope that our destinies may be one day united."

Lady Marchmont was startled at an energy of language and manner, which afforded undeniable evidence of the strength and fervency of Harold's affection for the lovely Gabrielle; and she could, with difficulty, restrain the expression of those feelings which this conviction excited; but it was not yet time to throw aside the mask of reserve and delicacy, which had hitherto veiled her guilty secret; and she accordingly confined her present aim to Harold's detention in Sicily; for which purpose she employed all the arts of rhetoric and persuasion, which appeared most calculated to effect her design. How far she would have succeeded is uncertain, had not our hero, in the course of a few days received a letter from his mother, in which she

conjured him, if he regarded his own happiness, to lose no time in returning to England, where his speedy arrival might yet prevent a threatened evil, which she could not then explain.

No mention was made, by her ladyship, either of Berrington or Miss Montgomery, and an indefinable suspicion of something wrong in that quarter, flashed, like lightning, across Harold's brain.—Could it be possible that Berrington had been acting a treacherous part towards the man for whom he had professed so warm a friendship? It seemed scarcely credible—and yet, his silence created alarm and suspicions, which he, in vain, endeavoured to repel; and, in a state of pitiable agitation, he determined on an immediate departure from Messina.

There was not, at this time, in the harbour any vessel bound for England; but, after diligent inquiry, Harold received intelligence that a sloop of war was to sail in a few days from a sea-port about

twenty leagues distant; and, having dispatched his servant with his baggage, and orders to secure a passage on board of her, he proceeded to pay his farewell visit at the Villa.

The intelligence that Harold was absolutely resolved upon returning to England was like a stroke of thunder to the dismayed Albina, and her ill-concealed agitation, her pallid cheek, and quivering lips, would have excited surprise and suspicion in any one less easy and confiding than the earl, or less vain of his own attractions than Harold, who, absorbed in the melancholy anticipation of impending evil, did not observe her emotion.

"And when must you leave us, Harold," inquired Lord Marchmont, addressing himself to our hero.

"To-morrow, my lord, certainly. The vessel is under sailing orders, and only waits a fair wind to proceed on her voyage."

"I am sorry," replied the earl, "that you depart so soon, for we had many pleasant schemes in contemplation, which your company would have improved. You must, however, stay at the Villa till to-morrow, and I will accompany you the first stage of your journey."

To this proposal Harold, at length, consented; and, with a promise of being back by the usual dinner hour, remounted his horse, and returned to Messina, to pay a few farewell visits previous to his departure on the morrow. During his absence, Albina had time to recover from the surprise and vexation into which she had been thrown by the first intelligence of an event which threatened to frustrate all the schemes she had so long been planning for the subjugation of her intended victim. She now, unexpectedly, beheld him on the eve of being emancipated from her power, without even retaining a hope of having made any impression upon a heart she believed frozen

and invulnerable as the snows of his own Cambrian mountains, except to *one*, who, by a strange fatality, was, apparently, as insensible to the passion she had inspired.

Worlds, had she possessed them, would Lady Marchmont have given for any plea which would have enabled her to prevent this dreaded journey, but no such subterfuge could be found ; and tears, excited by disappointed passion and mortified vanity, were still streaming from her eyes, when Harold entered the room. On beholding the situation of Albina, he hastily advanced, and, in an accent of surprise and tenderness, inquired the occasion of her apparent disorder.

For a moment Albina hesitated to reply; but she dared not, at this time, hazard the effect which an unreserved disclosure of her secret sentiments might produce upon Harold : and, with a well-assumed confusion, hastily withdrew the hand he had taken, which she placed before her eyes, as if to conceal from

observation her emotion and her tears; and, breaking from Harold, who attempted, in vain, to detain her, Lady Marchmont rushed precipitately from the apartment.

Pale, and motionless, Harold remained fixed to the spot where Albina had left him. A dreadful suspicion, for the first time, thrilled his breast; but he hastily repelled the unwelcome intruder, and hoped that some domestic vexation had alone occasioned the emotion recently evinced by Albina; and this hope was strengthened, on their again meeting at table, when her ladyship exhibited no traces of her late agitation. Her countenance, though pale, was chearful; and, though her voice, when she addressed Harold, occasionally faltered, its tremulous tones were only of momentary duration.

In the evening, when they were accidentally alone, the conversation turning upon the subject of his approaching de-

parture, Lady Marchmont exclaimed—"You leave us then, Harold, perhaps never to meet again; and, in the society of this too-fascinating Gabrielle, you will probably soon lose all recollection of your Sicilian friends."

"Not on my soul, Lady Marchmont!" he fervently replied; "never shall I forget your kind and friendly attentions, or the many pleasant hours your acquaintance has procured me; and sincerely do I hope that we may meet again, under happier and more chearful circumstances."

"Heaven grant we may—but, forgive me, my valued friend, if I cannot look forward, with any degree of pleasure, to the idea of your union with Miss Montgomery. Oh, believe me, Harold, a woman who loves, would not thus coldly calculate the chances of happiness with an adored object. We are, alas! but too willing to credit every thing, where our affections are interested!"

"Would to Heaven, my dear Lady Marchmont, that Gabrielle possessed a heart as tender and sensible as your own."

"Wherefore should you wish it, Harold; since she is far happier in her insensibility. Oh, trust me, it is sometimes a curse to feel too keenly." And, as she spoke, the eyes of the fair deceiver sought the ground, and the hand he had unconsciously taken, was hastily withdrawn from Harold, whose heart again throbbed with painful apprehension, and he mentally exclaimed in the bitterness of his secret feelings—"To what destiny am I still reserved? Is it not enough to be the slave of an attachment to a capricious and ungrateful woman; but I must be fated likewise, unintentionally, to disturb the peace of one, for whose happiness I would willingly sacrifice my own? Oh, no, I cannot, dare not, indulge so agonizing a supposition!"

The bare idea, however, deeply dis-

tressed him, and, combined with his other causes of alarm and disquietude, effectually to banish sleep from the pillow of Harold; who arose in the morning, feverish, languid, and unrefreshed: and, as soon as breakfast was over, prepared for his departure from the Villa di Marino. The children, to whom he had endeared himself, by numberless acts of kindness, wept, as he bade them farewell; and, unable any longer to support the expression of their artless sorrow, he again kissed them affectionately, and, pressing the hand of Albina to his lips, precipitately retreated from the house, followed by the earl, who persisted in his design of accompanying him the first stage of his journey.

CHAP. XVII.

AFTER escorting Harold a few leagues, Lord Marchmont took a cordial farewell of his young friend, who declined his lordship's offer of a servant to attend him: and, anxious to reach the place of embarkation, pushed forward with all possible expedition; an expedition, however, which had nearly proved fatal in its consequences, to his life. The rapidity with which he had travelled a considerable distance, during the meridian heat of a very sultry day, increased the feverish symptoms produced by uneasiness and want of rest; and, on arriving at a small hamlet, about five leagues from the destined port, he found himself too ill to attempt proceeding any further that night, and was, therefore, constrained to put up with the miserable accommodations of a little village inn, in the hope that a few hours

repose would restore him, or, at least enable him to pursue his journey.

In this expectation he was, however, deceived, for the short sleep which he obtained was uneasy and unrefreshing; and in the morning he awoke with every symptom of an approaching fever. These continued to increase during the day; and Harold, after sending for the nearest medical assistance to be procured, and giving a few directions to the people about him, in case of the worst, resigned himself quietly to his fate, of which he soon lost all consciousness in delirium.

Nothing, perhaps, could be more desolate and uncomfortable than our hero's situation at this moment. A stranger, at the mercy of strangers, in a foreign land. Far removed from every being who was interested in his existence, and surrounded by people, as rude and uncultivated as the place they inhabited, and whose feelings were not likely to be prejudiced in his favour, by knowing he was

an Englishman and a heretic. But, in every climate which has been tracked by the footsteps of man, the bountiful Creator has shed some portion of his own benignant spirit upon those that bear his image; and the savage, who, from the untaught impulse of compassion, shares with the fainting traveller his scanty meal, no less fulfils his will than he whose enlightened mind extends to countless numbers the influence of its bounty.

The person who had been called in to attend Lord Harold, was a brother of a neighbouring convent of Franciscan friars. The early part of Henrico's life had been passed in the bustle of the world, where affliction had taught him humanity. The stings of disappointment had driven him to monastic seclusion, where the study of nature, and the practice of piety had liberalized his sentiments, and softened his heart. The situation of his patient excited the interest and compassion of the good fa-

ther, who, though a catholic, believed it possible for virtue to exist beyond the pale of his own church; and, notwithstanding Harold was a heretic, he attended him with the most sedulous care, and, by his assiduity, ensured that of the people with whom he was. His exertions were crowned with success, and, in about ten days, our hero was able to leave his bed, and inhale the fresh breeze, as he sat by the narrow casement of his apartment, conversing with father Henrico, who congratulated him on his recovery, in a manner which left no doubt of the pleasure it afforded him.

The society and conversation of this excellent man pleasantly beguiled the time which Harold was still compelled to remain in his present abode. His manners, from a long intercourse with society, were polished; his discourse intelligent and scientific; and it was with regret Harold parted from a man, whose short acquaintance might be compared to a

lovely prospect—that charms and refreshes the eye of the weary traveller, but the remembrance of which soon vanishes from his mind.

On arriving at the port of ——, he found his servant under the greatest alarm and uneasiness at his protracted stay; and what was still more mortifying to Harold, the vessel in which their passage had been taken had long since sailed. It was nearly a month before another ship could be heard of; and almost fretted, by the irritation of suspense, into a relapse of his late illness, Lord Harold, at length, embarked for England, after an absence of fourteen months, with a mind oppressed by various causes, and health considerably impaired by anxiety and the effects of his recent disorder.—The passage was long and boisterous; and to the imagination of our hero, whose impatience wished even to outstrip the winds, appeared as if it would be endless.

The vessel, at length, dropped anchor in Falmouth harbour; and Harold, who knew his mother would be out of town, immediately on landing, threw himself into a chaise and four, and set off for Wales.

It was evening when he arrived; and the recollection of his last visit to Llanivar, with all the circumstances it recalled to his memory, did not serve to tranquillize his already agitated feelings. His emotions continued to increase as he approached the castle; and, when he alighted from the chaise, he could, with difficulty, falter out an almost inarticulate inquiry after his mother—and, without waiting to be announced, proceeded to the apartment where she was sitting.—For a moment, surprise and agitation deprived Lady Harold of the power of speech and motion, but the sound of his voice recalled her fleeting senses, and rushing into the extended arms of her

son, she gave a free indulgence to her maternal feelings.

When the first emotions were a little subsided, Harold remarked, with alarm, that his mother appeared unusually pale and dejected; and, his fears immediately recurring to the object who engrossed his every thought, produced a hurried inquiry after Gabrielle Montgomery. How, then, was this alarm increased, when Lady Harold, without replying, burst into a flood of tears!

"Good God! my mother!" he exclaimed, "What means this agitation?"

"Have you not, then, received my last letter?" enquired her ladyship, endeavouring to suppress her tears.

"The one in which you requested my immediate return to England?"

"No—a later; which I wrote about a month since. Oh, Harold! I see by your surprise it has never reached you—and you are still ignorant that Gabrielle is"—

"What?" exclaimed Harold, with desperate eagerness. "You weep, and are silent. Oh, my mother! torture me not thus, but, at once, confirm my worst apprehensions, by telling me that Gabrielle is dead!"

Lady Harold shook her head. "Would I could say she was—since it would probably pain you less than to know that she is married!"

"Married!" repeated Harold—"Married!" and fell senseless on the floor.

On recovering his recollection, he found himself extended on a sofa, with his mother weeping beside him; and, as he started up, and gazed around, with a wild and vacant air—"Where am I!" he faintly articulated.—Is this Llanivar?—Is this my mother?—Have I been in some horrid dream, or did you not tell me that Gabrielle Montgomery was married?"

Lady Harold replied only by her tears.

"And who," he continued, after a long

silence, "is he, for whom I have been thus abandoned?"

"Ere I tell you that, Harold, you must promise me to be calm."

"Ha!—my suspicions are then just.—Speak, quickly, my mother; and convince me that, from henceforth, there is neither faith nor honour in man."

"Well, indeed, may you in future doubt them, Harold; when you shall hear that Gabrielle is the wife of your perfidious friend Berrington!"

"Execrable, treacherous villain!" exclaimed Harold, starting from his seat, and traversing the room with disordered steps. "But I will yet be revenged, though I pursue the monster through the world."

Lady Harold endeavoured to soothe—to convince him that the being, by whom he had been so unworthily treated, was beneath his vengeance. "Consider, too," she added, "he is now her husband—and, though your hand may deprive Ber-

rington of life, Gabrielle is no less lost to you."

"Lost, indeed!" sighed Harold, and the long-suppressed tears of agony fell unconsciously from his eyes, but he scornfully dashed them away; and, with an assumed calmness, requested his mother to relate to him such particulars of Miss Montgomery's marriage as had come to her knowledge.

"It is but little I can tell you, Harold," she replied, "and that little will not much elucidate an event which, to me at least, wears an appearance of mystery, no less extraordinary than the conduct of Gabrielle herself. Of her, whom we both thought the most guileless and ingenuous of human beings. Forgive, dearest Augustus, a remark which distresses you, as I too plainly perceive it does by your tears."

"Tears!" repeated Harold, contemptuously—"Oh, no; she deserves not a tear from me;" and he leaned his head

against the arm of the sofa where he sat, to conceal the countenance which too eloquently betrayed his secret feelings.

From the brief narrative of his mother it appeared, that, soon after the departure of Harold from England, Gabrielle had fallen into a state of languor and depression, which excited the serious alarm of her idolizing uncle, who, imputing it to the effects of her close attendance upon him during his recent indisposition, hurried her precipitately to Weymouth.—From that time Lady Harold saw no more of her young friend, whose letters wore an air of constraint, and even reserve, very different from her former affectionate frankness.

The arrival of Berrington in England, and the reports which reached her of his being generally considered as a suitor of the Sicilian heiress (as Miss Montgomery was commonly called) first awakened suspicions in the mind of Lady Harold, which were confirmed by a letter from

Gabrielle herself, much to the same purpose as that received by our hero, in which she frankly avowed her reluctance to the union projected between them, and appealed to the generosity of Harold and his friends to release her from an engagement, which circumstances, well known to the former, and a minute examination of her own heart, convinced her would not be productive of permanent happiness to either party.

The contents of this epistle convinced Lady Harold that some plan was concerting on the part of Berrington which threatened destruction to the felicity of her darling son, and in a vague hope of preventing the blow aimed against his peace, she immediately wrote to intreat his return to England, without entering into explanations, the consequences of which she dreaded, should any unforeseen meeting take place between Harold and his perfidious friend, while the former was under the influence of his first re-

sentment. She was animated also by a hope that his speedy return might still awaken a sentiment of expiring tenderness in the bosom of Gabrielle Montgomery for the man to whom she had pledged her virgin vows of tenderness and fidelity; but Harold neither came nor wrote, and the maternal anxiety of his affectionate parent began to take alarm, when the intelligence of Gabrielle's marriage with Berrington gave a death blow to her remaining hopes, and annihilated all the prospects she had so long and fondly cherished. All was now at an end; and anxious to prevent any possibility of a meeting taking place, at least for some time, Lady Harold, in the letter she wrote to him containing the fatal information, earnestly recommended her son to continue in Sicily till he had in some degree recovered the shock which it must occasion him. She wrote also to Gabrielle in a stile of severity which was little consistent with her usual mildness

and moderation; but the feelings of a mother mourning in bitterness over the blasted happiness of a darling child were not qualified at that moment to inspire her with forbearance. During the course of her recital, Harold enquired of his mother, whether Gabrielle had ever mentioned receiving any letters from him after his departure? to which she replied in the negative, adding, that for some time previous to her leaving London, she had constantly evaded all conversation which had any reference to their avowed engagement, nor ever voluntarily mentioned his name.

"And where now," asked Harold, who had preserved a gloomy silence during the latter part of his mother's narrative, "is Gabrielle?"—and her husband—he would have added, but the words died away upon his lips.

"I do not exactly know," answered her ladyship; "they left town on their marriage, accompanied by Colonel Leslie,

for a tour, and are not, I believe, returned."

Lord Harold made no further enquiries, and the appearance of supper here interrupted the conversation, which was not again renewed. With an effort of fortitude, assumed to lull the fond anxiety of an affectionate mother, Harold did not refuse the refreshments placed before him, and even attempted to talk on indifferent subjects; but he was unequal to the effort, and, complaining of fatigue, soon withdrew, to give, in the solitude of his own apartment, a free indulgence to the feelings which oppressed his soul.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE keen eye of maternal fondness was not to be deceived by the illusive serenity Harold had assumed, and often during the course of this tedious and sleepless night, did Lady Harold steal with noiseless steps to the door of her son's apartment, listening with agonized anxiety to every sound within. She heard him traverse the room with a hurried and unequal pace, while his deep and stifled sighs betrayed his mental anguish. At other times he appeared alternately agitated by indignation and despair, and execrations against his perfidious friend were mingled with the lamentations he uttered for the loss of the lovely but inconstant Gabrielle.

Thus passed the heavy hours till morning, and Lady Harold, when she came

down to breakfast, was alarmed to hear her son was too unwell to be able to rise. In fact, the fever which had been lurking in his veins ever since he left Sicily, returned with augmented violence on a frame considerably weakened by the united effects of fatigue and agitation, and for many days threatened an hourly termination of Harold's sorrows. Unceasing were the prayers of his distracted mother for the preservation of her darling son, as she hung hour after hour over his pillow, while unconscious of her presence or her tears, he wandered, in fancy, through an imaginary world, where the forms of Gabrielle, Berrington, and Lady Marchmont, alternately presented themselves to his disordered imagination. Youth, however, and an unimpaired constitution, enabled him to struggle through his disorder, and he was at length restored to health, though happiness was fled beyond recal.

Harold's attachment for Gabrielle Mont-

gomery had been of no common stamp. It was founded on the only firm basis of enduring affection, a congeniality of tastes, of temper, and of sentiments. From long habit it had, as it were, identified itself with every feeling, and was entwined so strongly round each fibre of his heart, that the latter seemed to break with the stroke which had so rudely torn them asunder. His friendship for Berrington had been proportionably ardent, and that two beings so tenderly beloved, so fondly trusted, should apparently have combined together to deceive and render him miserable, was a blow which might have stunned a less susceptible mind than that of the young, the ardent, and sensitive Harold.

Pride, indeed, and that humiliating emotion, which, in a high spirit, naturally accompanies a conviction of having been imposed on where its confidence was unbounded, induced him to conceal his mental anguish, and from the moment of

his recovery, the names of Berrington and Gabrielle were never heard to pass Harold's lips; but the bitterness of his disappointment was evident, from the effects it produced on his own character, which seemed in many respects to undergo a material change.

It has been said by a celebrated writer that "Misanthropy is often nothing else but an abused sensibility;" and in this instance at least, the assertion would have been correct. The warm and generous feelings of Harold had been chilled by a disappointment of all others the most painful to youth and sensibility. His heart, stung by deceit and ingratitude, from a quarter where he had looked alone for tenderness and truth; and, in the language of Othello, he might have said—

"Had it pleased Heaven
To try me with affliction; had it rained
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steep'd me in poverty up to the very lips;
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,

I should have found in some part of my soul
A drop of patience:
But there, where I have garnered up my heart,
Where either I must live or know no life,
The fountain from the which my current runs
Or else dries up. To be discarded hence!
——————turn thy complexion there,
Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubim,
Aye there look grim as Hell!"

The whole world appeared now to Harold to be composed only of beings as faithless as Gabrielle, as perfidious as Berrington; and, under the influence of disappointed feeling, he fancied that he cordially hated all mankind; but it was only fancy; his heart was still alive to the power of nature and of humanity; but he loved to vent its bitterness in invectives foreign to his genuine sentiments, and spoke the language of misanthropy, while his conduct disowned its influence. Other consequences, however, followed the event which had so cruelly blasted Harold's hopes and prospects, that were more serious in their effects. The naturally pensive turn of his mind was

deepened into an habitual melancholy by reflections on the happiness he had lost, and the impossibility of its ever again being recovered. That brilliant imagination, which had coloured every object with its own delightful hues, now indulged only in portraitures as gloomy as his fate. His manners were tinctured, in some degree, by the tone of his mind, and the latter, restless and unsettled, could no longer relish those calm delights which are the usual attendants on a tranquil state of feeling. The effect of excessive grief is very different on different minds: for, while it softens some almost to weakness, it creates in others of a superior cast a stern grandeur of sentiment, a proud and solitary spirit of endurance, that scorns complaint, and broods in silent, unparticipated anguish over irremediable woes. Such was the present state of Harold's mind.

The delightful beam which had illumined his path and pointed his way

to happiness was now for ever extinguished, and blighted affection had left a drear vacuity of heart, a cheerless apathy of feeling, which rendered existence a scene of visionary and insipid joys. His present situation, by continually reviving the recollection of happier days, served to impress the contrast more forcibly upon his mind. Every object around him, every scene with which the lavish hand of Nature had decorated his paternal abode, spoke and breathed of Gabrielle. But it was Gabrielle perjured, and losing in the arms of another all remembrance of him, and tortured memory shrunk in agony from the recollections by which it was every where pursued. Wearied of himself, and of all around, Harold would have fled from the spot so painful to every feeling, could he have summoned resolution for the effort, or determined whither to direct his course; but there was no motive sufficiently strong to influence his choice, and he still continued in a

state of indecision, when a letter from Lord Marchmont roused him from his torpor, and fixed his wandering resolution.

It was dated from London, and contained the intelligence of his return to England, in consequence of a change of ministry, by which he had been nominated to a lucrative post under Government, which would again enable him to resume his former style of living in his native country. "From the hurry of his departure," he added, "he had been compelled to leave Lady Marchmont and her children in Sicily, whom he expected would arrive at Falmouth in the ensuing week; and, as he could not possibly leave town at this time, his present motive in addressing Harold was, to request the favor of him, if it did not interfere with any other engagement, to meet her ladyship at that place, and escort her to his seat in ——shire, about fifty miles from Llanivar, where he would join

them as soon as possible, and where Harold, he hoped, would consent to become their guest for some time." His Lordship concluded, with many apologies for the liberty he had taken, to which he was impelled by a knowledge of his (Harold's) kind and friendly disposition. and the desire he felt of communicating to him, the unexpected change which had taken place in his own fortunes, since they parted.

Two months before, this letter would have excited great uneasiness in Harold, who would have been embarrassed what conduct to pursue, but in the present state of his feelings, Lady Marchmont, or even an angel in woman's form, would be equally indifferent, and to refuse a compliance with the request of her lord, would, he thought, be little consistent with the gratitude he owed the Marchmont family, for the attentions he had received from them during his residence at Messina, "No!" exclaimed he, "I will

never, myself, be willingly guilty of the base crime of ingratitude, from the effects of which I now so severely suffer. To me it is immaterial where I am, and that scene of action will be always most acceptable, which affords the most frequent opportunities of being serviceable to others."

A very misanthropic sentiment, truly, the reader will exclaim. Alas! poor Harold! he was still ignorant of his own heart, and believing it cased with adamant, rushed fearlessly into a danger; against which he had none but an illusory defence.

On his communicating to her the contents of the Earl of Marchmont's letter, Lady Harold eagerly asked her son if he intended to comply with his lordship's request?

"Certainly I must," answered Harold, "if I would avoid being deservedly branded by the imputation of ingratitude."

"I am sorry for it then," she replied.

"And why so, my mother, if you please?"

"I will be candid with you, Harold," said her ladyship, after a moment's silence, "I dread your renewed intimacy with Lady Marchmont."

"For what reason? Do you suspect me of any dishonorable designs against her ladyship?"

"Heaven forbid, dearest Harold, I should have cause to do so; but I tremble at the possible effect of her allurements."

"There is no necessity for apprehension," replied Lord Harold, with a contemptuous smile. "Lady Marchmont, I grant you, is a woman, and may, therefore, prove deceitful; but as she *is* a woman, I am equally prepared against her deceptions, and as insensible to her allurements, as you are pleased to term them; though I regard it as justice to declare, I never saw in Lady Marchmont any

other allurements than those of beauty, sweetness, and delicacy of manners."

"Then, believe me, Harold," answered his mother, "you have already been deceived; for, if report belies her not, the Countess of Marchmont is no perfect paragon of spotless virtue, whatever she may be of beauty."

"All calumny! you may rely upon it, mother," exclaimed Harold, warmly. "Albina is too lovely, too fascinating, not to inspire envy; and envy loves to obscure that lustre it cannot wholly efface. But I thought Lady Harold had more candour and liberality in her nature, than to judge thus harshly of another, on bare surmises only?"

"My dear son," replied her ladyship, "I am, I trust, no rigid, and inexorable censor of the conduct of others, however I may disapprove of that species of liberality which exalts candour at the expence of principle, and mollifies and excuses criminal actions till all sense of

right and wrong is confounded. The world has talked very largely of Lady Marchmont on more occasions than one, and there is, I think, a degree of indecorum in the present proceeding, which must strike any unprejudiced person."

"What impropriety," asked Harold, "can possibly exist in what her own husband has proposed?"

"You do not appear sensible, Harold, of the unbounded influence she has obtained over this husband, who is a mere machine, to be actuated at her will, or, rather, you are resolved to hear nothing to the disadvantage of one, whose charms, and fascinations, have blinded your eyes to her defects. You believe yourself invulnerable to feminine arts, and attractions, and the ingratitude and inconstancy you have met with from one woman, makes you imagine, no other will ever be able to deceive you. Oh! Harold, I know you better than you do yourself, and that heart which you now think so frigid and

insensible. Beware then, and remember your mother has warned you of a danger you are determined not to perceive."

Harold smiled incredulously, and parted from his mother, half angry that she should so pertinaciously adhere to, what he considered, her prejudices against Lady Marchmont, while, with the self-confidence of inexperienced youth, the doubts she seemed to entertain of his firmness, and liability to seduction, confirmed his resolution of braving a danger, which, he affected to believe, existed only in her own imagination.

Harold, accordingly, wrote to the earl a letter of congratulation, in which he testified his ready acceptance of the office with which his lordship had honored him, and promised to be at Falmouth at the time appointed, in order to accompany Lady Marchmont and her children to Lime Grove. This letter dispatched, he prepared for his own journey, which was finally arranged for the following Monday.

as he was anxious to be at Falmouth a day or two, if possible, before the vessel arrived which was to bring over the countess and her family.

From the moment Lady Harold found her son resolved on his departure, she ceased to urge him on a subject which, she conjectured, would not be well received; but she had heard too much of the character of Albina, not to tremble at a danger she was unable to avert, and many an uneasy day, and sleepless night, bore witness of her anxiety on the occasion. Her spirits became more dejected as the moment of separation approached, and on the morning of his departure, while the horses were putting to the chaise, she approached the window where Harold stood, and taking his hand affectionately, exclaimed, "Be not offended, my beloved son, if, in bidding you adieu, I again recal to your remembrance my former caution. I do not doubt your honor, Harold, and am con-

vinced you will never be the seducer of Lady Marchmont, but I dread she should become yours, and darken with remorse and infamy a hitherto blameless life. Forgive me," she added, while tears of tenderness trembled in her eyes, "my maternal anxiety, and excuse it Harold, by the remembrance that you are the only hope of your mother, whose peace and happiness can never exist independent of your own."

In the heart of Harold, affection possessed a greater influence than pride, and though he secretly laughed at his mother's apprehensions, he could not be offended with the tenderness that inspired them. Again he repeated his assurances that all would be well; and every thing being ready for his departure, he tenderly kissed the good lady, who shed tears as she bade him farewell, and flung himself into the chaise, which soon conveyed him out of sight of the gray turrets of the castle of Llanivar.

CHAP. XIX.

On his arrival at Falmouth, Lord Harold had the satisfaction of finding the Arethusa frigate was not yet come into harbour, and the two days in which he awaited her arrival, was passed in solitary rambles about the town and its environs, where, the objects he beheld, would, at any other time, have awakened the liveliest interest in his mind. But when viewed by the eye of melancholy or despair, nature no longer appears to wear her wonted aspect, the "wan hue of sick fancy," pervades every feature, and the desponding heart absorbed in its own bitterness, is insensible to external objects, or beholding them only through the medium of a gloomy imagination, can see no beauty in them. To Harold, life and nature now presented only a dreary blank, and with the effervescence of youthful feel-

ing, still smarting from the effects of recent disappointment, he believed it impossible that any thing in either, should ever have power to interest him again. The idea of receiving Lady Marchmont, which a short time since had greatly agitated him, did not now excite the faintest emotion, and he went to meet her ladyship, on her arrival, with as much indifference as if they had been perfect strangers to each other. Far different, however, were the feelings of the impassioned Albina, when Harold thus unexpectedly appeared before her, and though they experienced a sudden damp, when he disclosed, in a few words, the occasion of his journey to Falmouth, she still felt flattered by his ready compliance with the request of her lord, and delighted at again beholding one, whose image, since they parted, had never been absent from her mind.

The alteration, produced by ill health, on his attenuated form, and faded coun-

tenance, with the deep melancholy which tinctured his conversation and manners, did not fail of exciting the observation and curiosity of Lady Marchmont; and, in the course of their evening walk round the town, she gradually drew from Harold a full disclosure of the events which had occurred since his return to England, and their consequent effect upon his mind.

Though secretly elated at the removal of so formidable a rival as Gabrielle Montgomery, the wily Albina assumed a language adapted to the occasion, the sweet and soothing language of regret and commiseration, while she softly murmured to Harold her hopes that he would yet taste of felicity.

"From love, Lady Marchmont?" he replied, "Never! Henceforth, I forswear it, though it wooed me, even in an angel's form."

"But, at least, Harold, friendship has also its pleasures, which are not unworthy of a mind like yours."

"It has already deceived me," answered Harold, with bitterness; "and never will I trust it more. I do not believe there is a human being who is capable of the sentiment."

"What, not one, Harold!" exclaimed Albina; while she fixed her eyes reproachfully upon him; and Harold, ashamed of testifying so unamiable a disposition as misanthropy in the presence of one from whom he had received so much kind and friendly attention, endeavoured to excuse the sentiments he had just uttered, by again reverting to the deception which had so cruelly blasted his happiness, and infused suspicions into his mind very foreign to its naturally candid and confiding nature.

The apology was readily admitted by Lady Marchmont, and her guileful pity, her flattery, her soothing expressions of regard and sorrow, failed not to produce the desired effect upon the feelings of Harold, who secretly acknowledged that

Albina, at least, deserved not to be included in the general condemnation he had passed upon her sex.

The following morning, Lady Marchmont and her party proceeded on their journey to Lime Grove; which was performed by easy stages, on account of the children, who were not yet entirely recovered from the fatigues of their late voyage. Faithful to the charge he had undertaken, Harold was unremitting in his attention to their comfort and accommodation, and in the evening of the third day, he had the pleasure of congratulating her ladyship on their safe arrival at the Grove, where they found a maiden aunt of the earl, who, at the request of her nephew, had purposely come from London to receive his wife and family in his absence. Anticipating the restraint her presence would occasion, Lady Marchmont could have well dispensed with the sight of her venerable relative; but it was necessary to preserve an out-

ward appearance of decorum, at least, to that world, whose good opinion she was desirous to regain; and, disguising her secret discontent, she received with smiles the stately welcome of Lady Diana, whose frigid manners did not convey a very favourable impression to the mind of Harold; and though, from a different motive, he wished her absence as heartily as Albina herself.

On entering the drawing-room, the latter playfully congratulated him on his release from a very troublesome charge. "And now, my lord," she added, with a look and accent expressive of the deepest sensibility, "allow me to request your participation in the joy of this moment, which again confers on Albina the power of welcoming her friends to a mansion of which she is not merely the nominal possessor. Welcome then, my lord, to Lime Grove, and may you find it sufficiently attractive to induce you long to remain the guest of its grateful owners."

Harold was affected, as well by the manner of Lady Marchmont, as by the ever ready tears which trembled in her lovely eyes, and he replied, with some portion of his accustomed vivacity :

"Most fervently do I congratulate your ladyship on an event, which will, I trust, be productive of all the happiness you can desire. Long, long, may the venerable shades of Lime Grove continue to shelter their fair and noble mistress, and may no unforeseen circumstance ever again banish the deities of domestic happiness from their peaceful and sequestered abode !"

To this sentence Lady Diana ejaculated an earnest amen, and a long exordium on prudence, &c. was interrupted by the entrance of the children, of whom the good lady was extremely fond, whose presence, and the remarks they occasioned, prevented any renewal of a subject which would have been very painful to our hero, who be[illegible]feel some degree of uneasi-

ness at the conversation introduced so *mal apropos* by her ladyship.

The week which elapsed, after her return to Lime Grove, before the arrival of the earl, was passed by Albina in secret repinings at the restraint which the presence of her aunt threw over those moments in which she had anticipated an uninterrupted enjoyment of Harold's society; while the latter, whose spirits were evidently amended since his removal from Llanivar, felt no uneasiness at a circumstance which occasioned so much inquietude to his fair hostess, and his time was alternately divided between the attentions which were due to her ladyship, and those pursuits, which, under the first pressure of affliction had become tasteless, but to which he now turned as his best means of pleasure and consolation.

There are few sorrows (except such as have their source in guilt) for which a beneficent Providence has not provided an antidote in the mind of the sufferer.

which enables him to extract the sweets of comfort from the bitter root of grief and disappointment. Memory supplies to us, in some measure, the friends we deplore, the joys we have lost, and to the mind of sensibility at once feeds and soothes its sorrows. There is a luxury of grief as well as of pleasure, which he who has felt will acknowledge to be fraught with consolation, and it was the indulgence of this luxury, and the faculty imparted by genius of giving a lasting existence to the glowing but transitory language of the heart, which now led back Harold to solitude and the "Muse's long neglected shrine."

His present situation was favourable to these pursuits; for there was no company at Lime Grove but himself, and the surrounding scenery was picturesque and beautiful in the highest degree, affording equal attractions to the painter, the poet, and the lover of nature. The house, an extensive and elegant building in the

modern style of architecture, was placed at the extremity of a gentle eminence finely wooded, and commanding from the summit a diversified prospect of a rich and cultivated valley, adorned with softly swelling hills, and terminated by the blue and broken line of the Hatterel mountains, sometimes half veiled in mist, and at others, glowing with all the radiancy of aërial hues. A double row of lime-trees, whose sweeping branches descended to the ground, darkened by their over-hanging shade, formed an avenue to the house, beyond which commenced an extensive range of plantations, whose sombre gloom gave a fine relief to the white pile of building beneath them, and composed the back ground of the picture. Several fine pieces of water adorned the park, which was large, and well laid out; and in the grounds contiguous to the house, the rustic alcove, the rude seat, and the classic temple, presented themselves where-ever an opening view claimed admiration,

or a more than common appearance of retirement, seemed to invite repose.

In these scenes of sweet seclusion and unostentatious elegance, the love of nature and of poetry, as well as the relish of social pleasure, again revived in the bosom of Lord Harold. *Happy*, indeed, he was not; for the trusting and deluded heart cannot so soon forget the bitterness of deception and disappointment; but remorse had not yet mingled her poisons in his cup of grief, and no affliction becomes insupportable till it is accompanied by the tortures of self-reproach.

The wound which Gabrielle's inconstancy had inflicted was assuaged by the conviction that it was undeserved; and though her image still clung pertinaciously round his heart, it was attended with less agonizing recollections than those which had accompanied it at Llanivar. Though unknown to himself, this was, perhaps, one reason for Harold's partiality to Lime Grove, where he could in-

dulge his regrets with a kind of melancholy pleasure, which he would have sought in vain at the other place, and he devoted every moment, in which politeness permitted him to absent himself from Lady Marchmont and her venerable relative, to solitary reveries, which, while they soothed his sorrows, served to lull his spirits into a soft and melancholy tranquillity.

Thus passed the first week of Harold's residence at Lime Grove. Happy would it have been for him if each succeeding one had been able to afford him equal pleasure in the retrospection.

CHAP. XX.

Lord Marchmont at length arrived, accompanied by a large party of friends, who had assembled to congratulate his lordship on his return to the mansion of his forefathers, and Lime Grove again became a scene of pleasure, where Albina, the gayest of the gay, the loveliest of the lovely, shone the idol of attraction, to whom all paid a cheerful and spontaneous homage. Harold beheld her courted and admired by those of her own rank, who, dazzled by her beauty, and fascinated by her manners, looked not beyond the exterior. He heard on every side the praises of her inferiors, for a benevolence and affability which it cost her nothing to practise, and his vanity, no less than his sensibility, was gratified by the evident partiality of a woman so generally admired, so apparently beloved as

Lady Marchmont, a partiality so artfully arrayed in the semblance of pure, though fervent friendship, that it did not alarm even the sensitive feelings of Harold.

It was by no means the intention of Albina, to permit the intended victim of her delusive arts, to escape the snares so assiduously laid for him, from the first moment they had met; but to effect this purpose, it was necessary to lull those suspicions, which the increased reserve of Harold, led her to believe, had stolen into his mind, and, in pursuance of her present mode of attack, she assumed an air of such perfect *nonchalance*, her manners were so easy and unembarrassed, so entirely void of every thing which denoted a secret consciousness of any sentiment she would have hesitated to reveal, that Harold was ready to accuse himself of a ridiculous vanity, in suffering such absurd chimeras to enter his imagination. His distrust thus vanquished, the transition to security and confidence was attended

with little difficulty; for in spite of his present assumed misanthropy, Albina's penetration discovered, that the heart of Harold was still alive to every softer feeling, that it secretly mourned the chill and dreary void occasioned by disappointed tenderness, and sighed for some being to participate its sorrows, and its joys. To supply this void, by the most delicate and flattering testimonies of regard, and friendship; to share the confidence of a heart which erroneously believed *her* feelings and sentiments congenial to *its* own, these were the points towards which the aims of Lady Marchmont were now directed, and every succeeding day augmented the influence thus obtained, over the mind of the unsuspecting Harold; who, beholding every thing through the medium of an enthusiastic imagination, invested the object of his mistaken admiration with ideal perfections, nor dreamt, that these assumed virtues were only well contrived manœuvres, in that

scheme of art and deception, which was directed against his peace, his honor, and his fame, by this dangerous and designing woman.

All the suspicions of her sex's truth and sincerity, which the conduct of Gabrielle had generated in his mind, were forgotten or disregarded, and he would have considered it almost a crime to have doubted the veracity of Lady Marchmont. So wavering in principle, so inconsistent in action is man.

Thus secure, as she hoped, of her devoted captive, Albina now sought to entwine his fetters with flowers, and a constant succession of amusements, which art and expence united to vary, were put in requisition to detain him for a longer period at Lime Grove, where, like Armida in her enchanted palace, she held him by a spell, of whose influence he was himself unconscious.

Possessed of the most splendid talents, whose sole aim was captivation, Lady Marchmont, by the irresistible powers of

her voice, her conversation, and her taste, succeeded in banishing dullness and ennui from the circle, by whom she was generally surrounded; for Albina lived only in a crowd, and every fresh arrival of fashionable guests at Lime Grove was regarded as a new call for the display of her attractions, and urged as a plea for new scenes of pleasure and dissipation.

A large party, among whom were several personages of high rank, had recently been invited to spend a short time with the earl, and anxious to shew her taste and liberality to such distinguished visitors, Albina was desirous of celebrating their arrival by a masquerade, which promised to afford ample scope for the display of both. Lord Marchmont, who dreaded the expences attendant on such an entertainment, seriously remonstrated against her intention; but Albina was not to be diverted from her design, and all her arts of persuasion were put in requisition to obtain his acquiescence. Unable to resist the united power of her argument

and her caresses, his opposition became every moment less decided. Lady Marchmont perceived the advantage she had obtained, and half serious, half sportively, swept into her lap the gold she had been soliciting, and with the transport and avidity of a child flew to give the necessary directions for the projected fête.

It was the desire of Albina that it should be attended with all possible splendor and eclat, and with this idea she expressed great anxiety that a large portion of her expected guests should appear in character. To her intreaties that he would comply with her wishes on the point, Harold at first appeared extremely averse; for the natural reserve of his disposition made him dislike every thing which looked like display; but her ladyship's reiterated requests at length overcame his reluctance, and he promised a compliance, on condition that she would herself chuse a character for him.

"Let us see!" exclaimed Albina, after a moment's reflection. "What think you of the Grecian costume? I have heard some of our friends distinguish you by the appellation of the modern Alcibiades. Suppose you assume the character of the young Athenian?"

"It would not, I am afraid, be very appropriate," replied Harold, gaily; "Alcibiades was a hero; but, alas! no laurels have ever entwined my immortal brow."

"Pshaw! Harold! Apollo has his laurel as well as Mars, and if your young Athenian was the bravest, he was likewise the handsomest, and most accomplished man of his age, the admiration of our sex, and the envy of his own. Positively you must have no other character, it will suit you á *merveille*, so no more objections, but prepare to sustain it to-morrow evening.'

Harold assured Albina, he would endeavour to comply with her wishes, and

at the time appointed, presented himself before her, habited according to her desire, and looking indeed the very character he had assumed.

Never had the matchless forms of Greece in their highest perfection of beauty, been more worthy of the picturesque and graceful costume in which classic taste had arrayed them, than his by whom it was now adopted, and the fine proportions of one of the finest figures nature ever formed, lost none of their effect by being contrasted with a countenance on which the emanations of intellect and the attractions of manly beauty were alike impressed.

Out of compliment to Harold, Lady Marchmont appeared as a Grecian nymph, and the character was well adapted for the display of those charms and graces she so eminently possessed. The rest of the party were habited as shepherds and shepherdesses, flower-girls, &c. as fancy prompted, and thus equipped.

the gay group repaired to the scene of pleasure, where all the beauty and fashion of the county were that night assembled.

The rooms were spacious, and splendidly decorated, and as art loves to borrow from nature a feeble resemblance of those rural objects and simple pleasures, the reality of which her votaries affect to despise, the principal apartment in the suite was converted into a grove of natural trees, intermingled with exotics, and wreathes of flowers, and clusters of coloured lamps were alternately disposed among the boughs. The floor was painted in imitation of turf, enamelled with flowers, and a canopy of pale blue silk composed the sky, into which the skill of the artist had introduced the silver crescent of the " pale eyed Dian," as the orb whose influence is most congenial to the cold and inconstant votaries of fashion and folly. This apartment served for the grand promenade of the company, and the attention of Harold was soon

entirely engrossed by the grotesque and motley groups, which every where met his gaze:

To those who are conversant with such scenes, it will be sufficient to observe, that this differed in no material respect from others of the same description. There was the same heterogeneous mixture of characters badly selected and ill sustained, which are to be seen elsewhere. Sultanas without dignity, and nuns without devotion, Apollos that did not resemble him of Belvedere, and Corydons, whose flocks must have been sought for in the vicinity of St. James's. Here some fashionable demi-rip, already past her prime, glided under the resemblance of a Sylph. There "a most potent grave and reverend Senator," sported a sa harlequin, and in another part, a friar's cowl enveloped the curled and scented locks of a profligate sprig of nobility. All the characters of classic fable and gothic romance were put in requisition for the

occasion, and the deities of Homer, and the heros of Walter Scott, might here be seen in *propria persona*, while the intermediate space was filled up with a motley crowd of flower-girls, fruit-women, Savoyards, and natives of all countries under Heaven.

Some of the characters, however, were well adapted, and supported with spirit, among which might be included those of two gentlemen of sporting celebrity, in the dress of stage coachmen, who spoke, and moved, and looked the very beings they appeared; but as these amateurs were well known frequently to adopt the same manners and costume on other occasions, it was considered as a matter of doubt whether the present was to be regarded as a real or an assumed character.

Amongst the varied and numerous resemblances which fancy or fashion had adopted, that of Lord Harold was not the least appropriate, nor the worst sus-

tained, and in the character with which the caprice of Lady Marchmont had invested him, he became an object of universal admiration. The natural vanity of youth, and the consciousness of his own powers, had determined him since he could not escape the ordeal she had enjoined, to go through it in the best manner he could, and assisted by a just conception of the character he had assumed, and directed by a classical and refined taste, his exertions were completely successful, nor had the gay, the versatile, the elegant Athenian ever found a more correct and fascinating prototype than was now beheld in Harold. Albina herself was not less perfect in the part she had undertaken. The elegant and sensient Greek breathed in every tone, and languished in every movement, and many an admiring eye hung enraptured on her graceful form, many an ear listened entranced to the melting accents of her enchanting voice.

As the evening advanced, Harold's attention was exclusively engrossed by a group of masks, advancing from one of the apartments adjoining the grand promenade; which the artist employed on the present occasion had converted into bowers and grottos, furnished with every necessary requisite for rest and refreshment. The group in question consisted of six persons, who had assumed their characters from the play of "The Tempest," as it originally stands in the pages of our immortal bard, unmutilated by modern interpolations and distortions. Prospero, and his Miranda, Ferdinand, Ariel, and two attending spirits, were all habited in their appropriate costume; but one form only in this picturesque group fixed all the wandering glances of Harold, till every faculty was absorbed in that of sight; a form so sylphid, so etherial, it seemed to have been produced by magic, and looked as if a sigh only might dissolve the fairy vision into its kindred element,

nor did the brightest creation a poet's fancy ever formed arise more lovely on the imagination of him who embodied and gave to—

> "Airy nothing,
> A local habitation and a name,"

than was the representative of Ariel; who now, like a spirit of light, appeared to the dazzled eyes of the admiring spectators. The gauzy texture of her glittering robes, the plumage of many coloured dyes which graced her shoulders; the long and silver wand she bore in her hand, all conspired to complete the deception, and as she moved slowly on, leaning upon the arm of the "mighty magician," the ear of Harold caught the sound of her voice, as in suppressed, yet seraphic tones, she murmured "Where the bee sucks, &c." Though evidently disguised, it was a voice whose accents were familiar to him, and an undefinable emotion thrilled his

heart, which determined him not to lose sight of Ariel and her companions. After taking a few turns about the room, he saw them enter one adjoining, where he soon discovered the rest of the group among some masks, who were "tripping on the light fantastic toe," beneath the umbrage of an artificial bower; but neither Ariel nor Prospero were there, and after an ineffectual search, he was returning to the apartment he had quitted, when as he paused for a moment in an avenue formed of orange and myrtle trees, with a lingering hope of still discovering the objects of his pursuit, he felt something lightly touch his shoulder, and hastily turning round, beheld Ariel alone. Surprise deprived him for an instant of the power of speech, and ere he had time to recover himself, the same entrancing voice he had before heard, sang the following, adapted to Moore's beautiful melody.

SONG.

Fly, oh, fly! the fatal bower,
Where poisons lurk in every flower,
Where syren looks and words beguiling,
Deadly fair, and falsely smiling,
Lure thy steps to stray.
Sorrow's tears the rose-buds stain,
And memory's thorns alone remain,
Then wherefore longer stay?

Fly, oh, fly! while yet 'tis time,
The rose may wither in its prime,
And brightest eyes their tears bestowing,
Ne'er again shall see it blowing,
Thrown despised away,
All its blasted sweets forgot.
Oh, think that such may be thy lot,
And make no more delay.

The voice ceased: but Harold still listened, and when his astonishment a little abated, he looked around in search of the unknown harmonist; she was gone; nor did he again behold her, during the remainder of the evening, which he passed in vain conjectures

on the original of the lovely, fascinating Ariel.

One being only was likely to have thus addressed him, and improbable as it seemed, he secretly indulged a fond and lingering belief, that this being was indeed the object, who, in the character of Prospero's ministering spirit, had excited so much curiosity and admiration; while he bitterly deplored that the sudden emotion excited by this incident, had, from its depriving him of his usual self-possession, prevented his endeavouring to obtain the elucidation he desired.

From the moment in which Harold was convinced that Ariel and her party were gone, the scene of gaiety in which he was engaged became wearisome and insipid, and after silently sustaining, for an hour or two, the railleries of Lady Marchmont, on the change which had taken place in his spirits, he gladly availed himself of the first opportunity of stealing from the sprightly throng, and, fatigued and de-

jected, retired to his own apartment, which he entered just as the grand luminary of day had gilt with his rising beams the venerable shades of Lime Grove.

Wild and romantic as the supposition appeared, Harold was not mistaken in the conjecture he had formed. It was indeed Gabrielle, who, under the semblance of a celestial visitant, had dazzled the eyes of the admiring spectators, at the Countess of Marchmont's masquerade, where curiosity had in vain busied itself in surmises upon the subject of the fair unknown, of whom no authentic information could be obtained, except, that she came in the party of a lady, whose residence was only a few miles from Lime Grove. To account for the appearance of Gabrielle, at an entertainment where Albina was the presiding goddess, it is sufficient to state, that the former was at that time upon a visit to a family which was included in the list of her ladyship's invitations, on the present oc-

casion. It was, of course, accepted, for though generally suspected of impropriety of conduct, Lady Marchmont was still visited and caressed by the many, to whom wealth and titles are never-failing passports, and an unwillingness to offend her hospitable hosts, joined to a latent wish of again seeing Harold, who, she heard, was then a visitor at Lime Grove, induced Gabrielle to accompany the party in question to the masquerade, where the intreaties of her friends prevailed upon her to make one in the group of charac-ters before mentioned. The sight of Harold, apparently devoted to the fasci-nating Albina; his appearance, and man-ners, so indicative of gaieté de cœur, dis-mayed and agonized the feelings of Gabrielle, and she returned from the festive scene in a state of mind the most pitiable and distressing, after breathing that warning strain, which made so lively an impression on Harold's mind. Happy, perhaps, would it have been for

him, had that impression retained a longer influence, but succeeding scenes of pleasure gradually effaced the remembrance, and he only thought of it as of an illusive dream, which beguiles the awakened fancy with a semblance of reality.

CHAP. XXI.

SOME time elapsed after the adventure of the masquerade, without producing any particular incident at Lime Grove, when the usual cheerfulness of Lady Marchmont suddenly gave way to an appearance of dejection and reserve, so artfully expressed, as to attract *his* observation only for whose notice it was alone designed, and who, with the warmth and freedom of unsuspecting friendship, interrogated her ladyship on the occasion of an alteration so sudden and so distressing; but Albina, in conformity to her present plan, constantly evaded his enquiries, while her language and manners were all so admirably contrived, as to impress upon his mind a belief, of this secret unhappiness being, in some degree, connected with himself. To one who was so complete a

mistress of art, this was not difficult, and the affected blush, the pretended confusion, the studied intonation of her voice when she addressed him, a glance, a sigh, a song, were, by an exquisite species of deception, converted by the dissembler into an expression of sentiments, which she dared not otherwise convey.

Again Harold's heart beat with fearful apprehension; but, a secret dread of the raillery of Lady Marchmont, should his suspicions prove erroneous, and the ridiculous light in which he must consequently have appeared, restrained him from seeking an elucidation to the doubts thus infused into his mind; but the evident uneasiness produced by such a painful supposition betrayed to the penetrating Albina that her arts had had the desired effect, and determined her future conduct.

A few guests only were now left of the crowd of visitors that had recently been successively staying at Lime Grove, and

their amusements, and style of living, began to assume a more domestic aspect. Riding, and walking, to which, a fine season and beautiful country afforded additional inducements, varied by occasional visits, and such scanty pleasures as the neighbouring towns presented, supplied the place of fêtes and festivities, and Harold, whose mind and spirits were fatigued, and enervated, by such a continual scene of dissipation, gladly hailed a return to more tranquil and congenial joys.

But this tranquillity was not of long duration, and the demons of passion and remorse were secretly impending, to convert the comparative serenity of a guiltless mind into a chaos of error and wretchedness.

The usual dinner party, at Lime Grove, was augmented, one day, by the presence of a family from the neighbourhood, the daughters of which were highly accomplished, particularly in music, of which

Harold was passionately fond; and on rising from table, he gladly joined the fair coterie, whom the extreme heat of the evening had drawn into the pleasure grounds, where, seated beneath the umbrageous foliage, on the margin of a lake, whose clear waters imparted a delicious coolness around, they "woke the soul to harmony," in a concert, where

> "Th' angelical soft trembling voices made
> To th' instruments divine respondence meet;
> The silver-sounding instruments did meet
> With the base murmur of the water's fall:
> The water's fall, with difference discreet,
> Now soft—now loud—unto the wind did call:
> The gentle, warbling wind, low answered to all."

Conspicuous among the lovely group, which environed her, sat Lady Marchmont, pensively leaning against her harp, apparently buried in a profound reverie, from which she was aroused by one of the party requesting her ladyship to oblige her with her favorite song, at the same time handing it to Albina, who, on per-

ceiving Harold, affected to hesitate, as she replied, " Indeed, my dear Miss, you would sing it much better yourself."

" That is impossible!" exclaimed the fair stranger, and she pressed her entreaty with so much earnestness, that politeness would not suffer Albina any longer to refuse a compliance with her request. It was that admired cantata of Metastasio, so well known to the lovers of Italian poetry, " Placido Zefferetto," and the voice of Lady Marchmont dwelt on the concluding lines of each stanza, with a pathos and expression, which was designed to attract the observation of Harold, nor did it fail of the effect intended.. All the suspicions so long cherished, so often combated, again rushed upon his mind. The present seemed the moment to confirm, or refute them, and as Albina repeated

" Ma non sò dir qual ciglio,
" Crescer ti fe cosi,"

he steadfastly fixed his eyes upon her face,

with a scrutinizing glance, which seemed as if it would read what was passing in her soul. Her blue orbs fell beneath his earnest gaze, a deeper tint of vermilion suffused her cheek, and hastily rising from the instrument, she affected to hide her confusion by plucking some of the flowers, which grew in luxuriant profusion around.

"Yes," Harold mentally exclaimed, "it is, indeed, as I feared. Heaven knows, vanity does not suggest the idea; for I would give worlds, did I possess them, to find myself deceived. Oh, dear and amiable Lady Marchmont, would we had never met, if your friendship for the unfortunate Harold has been instrumental in disturbing your repose!"

On reflecting, in the solitude of his own apartment, upon the events of the evening, the predominant emotion of his mind was regret, mingled with a latent emotion of gratified vanity, at the attachment evinced for him by one whom he

beheld an object of universal admiration; but of this sentiment he was himself unconscious, and the secret suggestions of prudence to fly, without delay, from the scene of danger, were scornfully rejected by headstrong and inexperienced youth, trusting in its own strength, and disdaining to seek safety, where it is most frequently found, in timely retreat.

We will not follow the devoted Harold, step by step, in his progress towards that precipice where all his hopes of happiness were fated to be wrecked for ever. The path into which he wandered had been strewed over with flowers, which concealed from his sight the abyss which yawned beneath him. Confident in his own strength, and heedless of danger, he ventured on; and each step, while it augmented the peril, diminished likewise the powers of resistance. Lady Marchmont was well versed in the study of the human heart; she had also minutely scrutinized the character of Harold in all

its various bearings—its weakness, its natural propensities, its acquired habits, were all observed and noted; and she knew that

> " Alive to every thrill of love and joy,
> Fan cy, thy wayward child was ever found
> To tread the flowery maze of Passion's fairy ground.'

Here, then, was the foundation on which she placed her hopes of conquest, and the charms and sorceries of a being, whose powers of fascination were almost unparalleled, failed not to be attended with fatal consequences to her devoted victim Every allurement which could ensnare the senses—every delusion which could soften and deceive the heart, were planted in formidable array against him; and the result was such as his own reason, had he listened to its suggestions, might have led him to foresee.

" There are," says a celebrated writer, ' s ome unhappy moments, in which the

most virtuous are the most feeble." And, in one of those unguarded moments, when his better angel slept, Harold fell from that honour he had hitherto preserved unsullied—violated the ties of hospitality and friendship, and opened for himself a source of misery, which was destined to overshadow the brightest horizon of his future years.

Transient, however, was the dream of guilty passion; and, as the delirium of the moment subsided, the enormity of his crime appeared in all its horrors to the dismayed and shrinking imagination of the unhappy Harold. Tortured by remorse, for the supposed seduction of a woman, to whose real character he was still a stranger—pursued by the reproaches of his own heart, for the base return he had made to the kindness and confidence of his unsuspecting friend; and agonized by the tears and upbraidings of the artful Albina, Harold fled from the scene of guilt and madness, in a state of mind

which language would prove inadequate to pourtray.—All nature was serene and smiling around him—the flowers revived, by dropping dews, breathed fragrance on the freshened breeze, and twilight's "beaming star," sparkled with bright reflection in the clear and unruffled waters of the lake; but to the gloomy fancy of Harold, darkness and horror seemed to rest on every object, and, as he traversed its margin with hurried steps, he felt as if he almost expected the thunders of an avenging Deity would fall and crush him.

"Wretch, that I am," he exclaimed, as, exhausted by extreme agitation, he threw himself beneath the waving foliage, and pressed his burning forehead to the cold and glistening dews which spangled the verdant turf, "into what an abyss of guilt and misery have I now plunged? How shall I again venture to face the injured, unsuspecting Marchmont? How meet the tears and reproaches of the unhappy woman, of whose fatal attachment

I have taken such a base advantage? Oh, I cannot support the maddening remembrance!" And, overwhelmed alike by the idea of the past, and of the future, Harold seemed, for some moments, to lose the recollection of his present situation in a kind of torpor—the effect of emotions wrought up almost to frenzy by their intense violence.

His first impulse, when reflection had resumed its wonted influence, would have led him immediately from Lime Grove, but the dread of exciting suspicions, which might involve the honour and reputation of Lady Marchmont prevented this intention, and still detained him in a spot where every succeeding moment inflicted a fresh pang upon his tortured heart, while, like the first murderer, who bore upon his brow the legible impression of his crime, Harold read his accusation in every eye.

It was now that he indeed felt himself truly miserable; nor had he the power,

as in former circumstances, of deriving support and consolation from the resources of his own mind. There, all was anarchy and wretchedness ;—the pride of talent, the conscious possession of unblemished integrity, were humbled and destroyed ; and he, who had looked down upon the bulk of mankind with an innate feeling of superiority, now shrank, abashed, at the presence of the man he had wronged, and whom he had hitherto regarded as a being of inferior order, whose weakness and deficiencies merited commiseration, and called for indulgence.

With an emotion of perfect unconcern, Lady Marchmont beheld the secret remorse and anguish of the deluded and unhappy young man, whom her criminal passion and wily arts had plunged in guilt and misery, which she guilefully augmented by her pretended sorrow ; accompanied by all the irresistible eloquence of sighs and tears, exclusive ten-

derness and devoted attention, which were designed as so many silent appeals to the feelings of a too susceptible heart, which might confirm him still her captive.

From a situation so painful and humiliating, Harold was, at length, released, by a letter from his mother; who, after expressing her surprise and anxiety at his long silence, continued—

"Though you have, I presume, been too much immersed in pleasure to find leisure to think of your mother, I have heard of you, Harold, in a manner which has given inexpressible pain to my heart. Oh, wherefore have I lived to blush at a name which, till now, I never heard but with a thrill of delight? or rather, why did you so obstinately reject the warnings and admonitions of your mother, who has but too well foreseen the consequences of your Sicilian connections?—The world, Harold, talks largely of Lady Marchmont and yourself; and, whether

guilty or not, your honour and reputation are endangered by your longer continuance at Lime Grove. Of your innocence in this affair I dare scarcely entertain a hope, when I consider the dangerous and artful woman to whose allurements you have been exposed. Your late neglect, too, so different from your usual tenderness, convinces me you are much and greatly changed; and I predict utter ruin both to your fame and principles, if you continue an inmate of your present abode. Formerly I used to repine at the niggardness of nature, in only bestowing on me one child. Alas! I now tremble, lest that *one* should be sufficient to bring down my grey hairs with shame and sorrow to the grave."

After proceeding some length in the same style, Lady Harold concluded, by requesting his immediate return to Llanivar, where she was then suffering from the effects of a severe indisposition; which she assured him his presence would

be more efficacious in dispelling than all the prescriptions of her physicians.

Harold's heart smote him as he perused this epistle, and he more bitterly execrated the fatal infatuation which had thus betrayed him into a wilful neglect of the sacred claims of nature and affection.—"A short time since," he exclaimed, as in an agony of vexation and self-reproach he consigned the paper to his pocket, "and I should have met these insinuations with the contemptuous scorn of insulted innocence. My conscience now tells me they are deserved; and I must appear before my beloved and venerated mother, with the dreadful and degrading confession, that her darling and highly-estimated son has proved himself a villain."

To set out instantly, however, was his fixed determination; and, with the open letter in his hand, he repaired to the boudoir of Lady Marchmont, to whom

he abruptly communicated his intention of immediately returning to Llanivar.

"To Llanivar!" exclaimed Albina, turning pale, "and for what reason?"

"My mother is very ill," he replied; "and has expressed an earnest desire to see me."

Lady Marchmont, who suspected his mother's illness might only be a pretext for his absence on the part of Harold, had recourse to tears and supplications, in hopes of diverting him from his design; but the latter was firm in his resolve; and, as he wished not to offend or distress a woman, who had, he believed, sacrificed herself to her attachment for him, he endeavoured to reconcile her to his departure, by representing to her ladyship that his long stay at Lime Grove had, he found, already created remarks and inuendoes, which could only be obviated by his absence."

"And you do not intend, Harold,"

exclaimed the weeping Albina, "that we should ever meet again?"

"As *friends*, Lady Marchmont," he firmly answered, "I trust we hereafter may. In any other light never: and, ere we now part, let me conjure you to banish from your mind the dreadful recollection of the past; to think only of Harold as of one who dares not aspire to, but would yet deserve your friendship."

Lady Marchmont was startled at a fervency of address and language, which convinced her Harold was really serious in what he had been saying; but, confiding in the power of her own attractions, she repressed the expressions of resentment which were rising to her lips, and assumed a part adapted for the occasion, rightly judging that the captive who appeared so eager to shake off the fetters she had imposed upon him, was not likely to be influenced by violence to resume them again. Her tears, her self-

reproaches, her affected humility, mingled with artful professions of tenderness and sorrow, wrung the heart of Harold with new pangs of remorse and agony. Hastily he tore himself away; and, after taking leave of the earl, whose every expression of regret and kindness conveyed a tacit reproof, gladly quitted a place whose recollection was fraught only with bitterness—where the allurements of a syren had betrayed him into guilt, sullied his fair fame, and blighted, by their infectious influence, the opening blossoms of genius and virtue in a noble mind.

CHAP. XXII.

As he who has been for some time exposed to the effects of a noisome and pestilential atmosphere, turns with peculiar delight to the influence of a pure and wholesome air, so the historian of Harold, whom truth compelled to trace his wandering footsteps through the thorny mazes of delusion and error, now prepares, with renovated power to follow him back to scenes of youthful innocence and virtuous affection, where love entwined its roses, unstained by tears of bitterness and remorse, and where the tender, though faded colourings of a guiltless memory still imparted their radiance to that horizon from whence the glowing hues of love and fancy had fled for ever.

Harold seemed to breathe more freely in proportion to the distance he removed from Lime Grove and its enchantress.

whose magical spells appeared to lose their influence, when she that created them was no longer present; but, as the turbulence of his feelings subsided, the enormity of the past presented itself in a more hideous form, and every retrospection increased the bitterness of remembrance, attended with melancholy anticipations of the future consequences which might ensue from his criminal entanglement with a woman, whose supposed dishonour weighed heavy on his heart, and whose apparent wretchedness added two-fold pangs to his remorse and self-accusations.

These oppressive feelings were not relieved by the recollections his approach to Llanivar recalled. The days of innocence and early love arose to his imagination like phantoms, which he sickened to review; and the form of Gabrielle Montgomery, adorned with all the graces of beauty, simplicity, and tenderness, haunted every grove, and reposed

beneath every bower, in that spot where she had so often met his gaze.

He found his mother even worse than he expected, and though her affection prompted her to conceal the fact, Harold was but too well convinced that anxiety on his account had been the principal cause of her present indisposition. She, however, testified the utmost joy at his arrival, and not a single reproach, not a word, which had any tendency to recall the past, escaped her lips—a trait of delicacy and kindness which affected Harold more forcibly than any remonstrances would have done, and stimulated his endeavours to efface, by his present tenderness and attention, the memory of his former neglect.

Unremitting in his exertions to amuse the heavy hours of a slow convalescence, he devoted his whole time to this object. He read to her while she worked—attended her in her walks and rides; and conversed on every subject but *one*, which,

by a mutual, though tacit agreement, each party seemed equally disposed to avoid. It was, indeed, the only subject which would have been likely to occasion any disagreement in their opinions; for Lady Harold, who detested Albina, could not have mentioned her, but in terms of acrimony and reproach; and Harold, who was well aware of his mother's sentiments, would not venture to hear such terms applied to a woman who, he believed, had never, but in one instance, deviated from virtue, and whom he still pitied, though to esteem her was no longer in his power.

This circumstance, however, threw a restraint over their social hours which was felt by both, but in a more particular manner by Harold, whose tortured heart sighed to repose its anguish on the bosom of sympathizing affection. This he could not do, without entering into details which would only augment his mother's detestation of Lady Marchmont—details

which honour and generosity alike forbade; and thus shut out from all participation in his feelings, Harold confined to his own bosom the cares which consumed him, while he sought, by affected cheerfulness, to delude the fond eye of maternal tenderness.

He was disappointed in this aim, for, with renovated health, the natural acuteness of her perceptions returned; and Lady Harold, with her usual penetration, saw that her son was ill at ease, and tenderly inquired if he was unwell?

Harold answered in the negative; though his faded cheek, and the general languor of his appearance, seemed to contradict the assertion.

"What then," continued Lady Harold, "is the cause which thus oppresses your spirits, if your health (as you would lead me to believe) is uninjured?"

"There are several," he replied, "which cannot fail to affect me, in the recollections they are calculated to excite;

and, shall I add, that a long period must elapse before a residence at this place will cease to depress my spirits in a very sensible degree."

"And is it possible," inquired Lady Harold, in a tone of surprise, "that any recollections attached to Llanivar, should *now* be capable of giving you pain."

"Oh, my mother!" exclaimed Harold, with emotion, "and can you indeed be serious in asking me this question? Do you really think that a few short months of folly have obliterated from my mind an image which will never cease to retain its empire there? An image, fraught with every thing which is sweet, and innocent, and lovely. Oh, learn to judge more worthily of the feelings and principles of your misguided, but not abandoned son."

"Wherefore," exclaimed Lady Harold, much affected by his manner, "did you not tell me this before? With an inexpressible sorrow, I have observed you

pining away in despondency, while you thus withheld from me a knowledge of the remedy which might effect your cure. What to me is place or residence, when put in competition with your peace? Let us immediately remove from Llanivar, and never, I beseech you, return hither again, till you can do so without a pang."

The goodness of his mother affected Lord Harold almost to tears; who, finding her firmly resolved on her departure, but faintly opposed a measure which was seconded by his own wishes; for Llanivar of all places was the one he most desired to fly from at this time.

It was accordingly settled, after a short deliberation, that they should remove to an estate Harold possessed near the coast, which had not been visited by any of the family for a number of years, though the situation was romantic and beautiful, and the surrounding country fine and well inhabited; but the Castle of Llanivar had been the favourite residence of the de-

ceased Lord Harold. There he lived and died; and, attached to the place where his remains were deposited, Lady Harold had never felt any inclination to leave her present abode. Dolvellyn had consequently been much neglected, and our hero anticipated amusement both to his mother and himself in restoring the latter place to its former state.

A few days completed the necessary preparations for their departure, and Harold and his indulgent parent bade adieu to Llanivar for an indefinite period, with sensations not unmingled with regret, which they mutually sought to conceal; the former lest it might be construed by her son into reluctance to quit a place which was become painful to his feelings; and the latter, from a fear that any one should suspect him of a weakness which he blushed to acknowledge to himself; for though the idea of Gabrielle, by continually obtruding itself upon his recollection, embittered every moment he

passed at Llanivar, he sighed at bidding perhaps a last farewell to the spot she had so much loved, and where he had spent with her those hours which were destined he believed to be the only happy ones in his existence.

CHAP. XXIII.

DOLVELLYN Park, whither we are now conducting Harold and his companion, was situated in Glamorganshire, contiguous to the sea shore, and commanding a view of the noble bays of Swansea and Caermarthen. A fine range of rocky scenery, interspersed with wood, extended to some distance beyond the house, which, though rather small and much out of repair, was elegant in its design and construction, and capable of being easily converted into a handsome marine villa.

The grounds were extensive and finely disposed, but neglect and desolation were every where visible, and all things, both within and without the mansion, called for the hand of improvement and cultivation. The scene was new to Harold, who had never been at Dolvellyn before, and the occupation it now afforded to his

time and taste in embellishing his new residence, at once served to interest his mind and banish the recollection of more painful subjects.

This object, and the pleasure he derived from a sailing vessel, which he had purchased for the purpose of marine excursions, seemed to leave him no wish for any other amusement or society, and those of Lady Harold were all gratified in beholding his cheek again resume its faded roses, and the dark clouds of distress and anxiety vanish from his manly brow. The pursuits which interested him became her own. Her dread of the sea gave way to her desire of accompanying Harold in his little voyages, and she entered with spirit and alacrity into all his plans of improvement, regardless of the fatigue she sometimes experienced, and only anxious

"To steal from memory's wound affliction's rankling thorn."

Nothing of this was lost upon the ob-

ject of her fond attentions, and it was repaid on the part of Harold by all those continual, though unobtrusive expressions of tenderness, which the heart of affection so well knows how to estimate. In the decorations or improvement of Dolvellyn, if any little difference happened to arise in their tastes or opinions, it was his mother's wishes that were his guide.

When the companion of his excursions his mother's inclinations always directed their course. The books he ordered, the music he practised, were chosen with a reference to her amusement, and Lady Harold, with tears of gratitude, blessed Heaven for these days of happiness, which its bounty had permitted her to enjoy; but a felicity so pure was not destined to last for ever.

The season for aquatic excursions was now nearly over; the alterations and improvements at Dolvellyn were likewise almost completed; and Harold, whose ardour for these pursuits was much abated,

sought a diversity of amusement in riding, generally alone; for it was an exercise his mother had long resigned, and she took advantage of his absence to visit the cottages on her demesne, and inquire into the situation of their inmates, whose wants were supplied by her benevolence, and their lot ameliorated by her residence among them.

One evening Harold returned not from his ride at the usual hour, and his mother, who always waited tea till he came home, began to feel uneasy; but this inquietude changed to alarm when another hour had elapsed without bringing his return, and she would have dispatched every servant in the house in search of his lordship, could she have conjectured which way the latter had directed his course.

The clock struck ten, yet he came not; and the apprehensions of Lady Harold were fast approaching to terror, when they were relieved by the trampling of

horses on the road leading to the house, and the next moment she heard the voice of Harold addressing his servant as he dismounted. Her fears for his safety were now at an end ; but great was her surprise and consternation when she saw him enter the apartment pale, trembling, and apparently sinking under the weight of his emotions, while flinging himself into the first seat that offered, he remained for some moments unable to answer her interrogatories as to the cause of his present situation.

"Oh my mother!" he at length articulated, "I have again seen her! again held her to this desolate heart, where she still reigns in defiance of reason and of perfidy."

"Whom have you seen?" asked Lady Harold, falteringly, her whole soul sickening at the idea of her son's having by some accidental circumstance again encountered Lady Marchmont.

"Gabrielle!" he replied, with still

greater agitation, "the lovely, inconstant Gabrielle, who, unknown, and unsuspected by us, has been residing for the last three months scarcely five miles from the spot which we inhabit."

It was now Lady Harold's turn to be agitated; for her presageful heart anticipated the most direful consequences, should an interview have taken place between her son and the husband of Gabrielle, and she could with difficulty enquire of the former—"How and where he had met Mrs. Berrington?" when she learnt the following particulars from his broken and incoherent narrative:—

Lord Harold had that evening pursued his ride to an unusual distance through the vale of Neath, along a river, whose high and woody banks were partly broken into naked cliffs, and as he slowly descended an eminence, his attention was caught by the little village of Britton Ferry, with its rustic church and picturesque cemetery; where, in conformity

to the lovely and affecting custom prevalent throughout the principality, the sorrowing hand of surviving tenderness had strewed the "narrow house" of death with flowers, worthy, by their beauty and fragility, to serve as emblems of mortal existence. Beyond the church-yard extended a dark mass of wood, behind which arose the turrets of an ancient baronial mansion, and Harold, who was desirous of a nearer inspection dismounted from his horse, and ordering the groom to await his return at the village Inn, took a foot-path across the fields. After proceeding about a mile, he found himself in a green and shady lane, terminating in a plantation, where the vacancies between the trees were adorned with lilacs, liburnums, and other flowering shrubs, and at intervals a break in the boughs formed a vista which disclosed a view of the mansion Harold had before observed.

Impelled by an irresistible curiosity, he pursued his way through the planta-

tion, and at the farther extremity perceived a sort of hermitage, surrounded on every side by a thick wilderness of shade, while a stream, clear as crystal, crept through the long grass, and was formed into a cascade a little below the building. Harold hesitated whether he should proceed, when a soft strain of music stole upon his ear, which seemed to come from the hermitage, accompanied by the accents of a voice which thrilled his heart from its resemblance to *one* whose tones that heart could never cease to vibrate. Hastily he approached an ivy-mantled window that was thrown open to admit the air, and beheld, pensively leaning against a harp, on whose glittering chords her hands still rested, the lovely wife of the treacherous Berrington.

For a moment the heart of Harold ceased to beat, and he sank powerless and exhausted against a tree beneath the building; but transient was the relief thus afforded to his agonized feelings.

Recollection too soon returned with all its bitterness, when again approaching the window, he remained for some time in earnest contemplation of the form before him. Never had Gabrielle appeared more lovely in the eyes of Harold than at this moment, when both her posture and her employment conspired to invest her with additional charms, and had he not been too fatally convinced of the contrary fact, he might have, perhaps, been inclined to regard her as some fairy genius of the place rather than a mere mortal woman.

Her strain had ceased; but she still sat bending over the harp, while her uplifted gaze seemed to pursue the bright orb whose setting beam trembled on the opposite woods, and was reflected in the dark and lucid eyes of Gabrielle, which,

"Like the dewy star
"Of evening shone in tears."

She had evidently been weeping, and a few pearly drops still hung upon the cheek from whence the glowing roses of youth and health had disappeared. There was an appearance of negligence in her dress that indicated a disregard of external circumstances inconsistent with the self-attention natural to a young and lovely woman; and her apparent sadness, her mournful and interesting paleness, softened the heart of Harold into tenderness and grief. His resentment at her perfidy was forgotten in anguish for her loss and sorrow at the belief of her being as miserable as himself.

"Oh, well! well did I know!" he mentally exclaimed, "that he for whom Gabrielle sacrificed me, could never confer upon her the happiness she would have tasted with the unfortunate Harold."

At that moment Gabrielle again struck the chords of her harp, while she murmured in a low and plaintive tone, the exquisite lines of Burns,

"Fare thee weel thou first and fairest,
Fare thee weel thou best and dearest," &c.

Her voice was broken by tears; yet its sweetness was not diminished, and the sounds so long cherished with fond enthusiasm by the ear of love, now revived every recollection, which was calculated to madden the senses of the unhappy Harold.

His brain swam; a sensation of suffocation seemed to oppress his heart; and regardless of every suggestion of reason, every prudential consideration, he rushed forward, and presented himself before the astonished Gabrielle.

With a faint shriek she sprang from her seat, and attempted to pass him as he entered; but her situation prevented her moving with rapidity, for he now remarked that she was far advanced in that state which promised shortly to add the name of mother to that of wife, and she again sank motionless, though

not insensible, upon the couch she had quitted, while Harold, unable to speak, stood gazing upon her for some moments with the fixed countenance of despair.

His silence afforded Gabrielle time to recover from the confusion this unexpected incident had excited, and though in a voice tremulous with emotion, she demanded his motive in seeking the present interview.

Almost maddened by the cool indifference her manner indicated, Harold lost all command over his feelings, and grasping her cold and trembling hands in his, he exclaimed, in a voice hoarse from contending passions, "cruel! insensible woman! can you ask that question of the man whom your perfidy has undone?"

"Say, rather my lord," answered Mrs. Berrington, shrinking in terror from his grasp, "whose fatal errors have undone himself!"

"And were there none," exclaimed

Harold, still more vehemently, "who could be found to retribute these errors, but she whom I loved, she whose affections had been pledged my own by vows more strong than language has ability to supply. For this cause, no doubt, Miss Montgomery became the wife of a villain, who treacherously broke through every tie of honor and friendship to call her his; but who shall not yet triumph over his victim unrevenged, for fatal to one of us must be the moment we again meet."

And what does Lord Harold propose to himself by such a design?" asked Gabrielle, with an affected calmness; "Can he hope to regain the good opinion of a woman whose esteem he has professed to value by the murder of her husband?"

"You love him, then?" exclaimed Harold, in a tone of agonized feeling.

"It is my duty," answered Mrs. Berrington, evasively, "and the same duty imperiously commands me to terminate an interview which malice or imper-

tinence might construe in a manner equally injurious to yourself and me. Suffer me then to depart, my lord, ere the eye of intrusive curiosity beholds us here; for in that case the consequences might be dreadful to us both." And while she spoke, the expressive looks of Gabrielle convinced Harold her fears were not assumed for the purpose of exciting his own.

"Go, then, Madam," he haughtily replied, "I wish not to detain you; yet, surely, even the scrupulous delicacy of Mrs. Berrington might vouchsafe some concession in behalf of the man she once deigned to honour with her regard."

"For what purpose, my lord, would you desire me to stay?"

"To demand an explanation of your conduct, and to attempt at least an extenuation of my own."

"I have no right," replied Gabrielle, "to require a vindication of any conduct your lordship might think proper to

pursue; nor is any explanation requisite for mine. Retrospection of the past is now unavailing: yet, oh, Harold! if I could still believe that a request of mine would influence your actions, I would conjure you to suffer the remembrance to serve as a beacon to your future steps. I would induce you to spare some fond confiding heart the pangs"—which have wrung mine, she would have added, but she paused, fearful she had said too much; and Harold, much affected, replied—

"Too well I see, Gabrielle, that I have for ever forfeited your esteem, by those errors which have, indeed, met a dreadful retribution; yet, surely, it was sufficient for you to reject the misguided Harold without depriving him of every comfort, by your union with his rival. Oh, that way madness lies," he added, grasping the hand he had unconsciously taken in his own.

"Then tempt it not, Harold;" replied

Gabrielle, in a hurried voice, "since it would now be useless."

"Answer me then one question. Are you happy?"

"Happy!" repeated Gabrielle, in a melancholy accent, "happy!" and tears fell unheeded from her lovely eyes.

Harold started. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "what means this inexplicable conduct! Can the young and lovely Mrs. Berrington, the wife of the man she preferred, she on whom nature and fortune have lavished all their gifts and graces, can she have cause for sorrow?"

"Harold!" exclaimed Gabrielle, hastily rising, "farewell! If you regard my peace or your own, make no farther inquiries, and suffer me now to leave you."

As Mrs. Berrington ceased speaking, she approached the door, when as she slowly passed the threshold, Harold, who had continued to gaze after her in silence, sprang hastily forward, and caught her hand, exclaiming, "You go then, Ga-

brielle, without one expression of friendship—one token of pity or remembrance, to soften the miseries of an eternal farewell?"

Gabrielle hesitated, but her eye beaming tenderness and compassion, emboldened the unhappy Harold to clasp her to a heart whose convulsive throbs betrayed its anguished feelings. Pale, and trembling, she remained for a moment almost insensible in his arms; when, restored to a sense of her situation, she hastily disengaged herself from the fervent pressure of Harold, and precipitately quitted the hermitage.

For some moments after Gabrielle's departure, he remained rooted to the spot where she had left him, with his eyes intently fixed on her receding figure: but when the waving of her white robe, as she slowly disappeared among the trees, no longer caught his view, he hastily rushed from the place, where they had so unexpectedly met, and in a state of direful

agitation returned home, where, the tale he told, and the emotions he exhibited, excited no slight degree of alarm and anxiety in the breast of his sympathizing and affectionate mother.

The comparative tranquillity which had been felt by Harold, since his residence at Dolvellyn, was completely destroyed by an event, which had again revived in all its force, an attachment that had been suppressed, but not subdued, by time; and which now acquired additional strength, from the dear, and dangerous suggestion, that Gabrielle still mourned his loss—still cherished his remembrance: a suggestion awakened by a retrospection of their last meeting, when, notwithstanding the veil, which delicacy and lingering resentment had endeavoured to throw over them, her heart's soft feelings had trembled on her lips, and beamed from her expressive eye, and though respect for the pure virtue of Mrs. Berrington, and a tender regard for

her fame, prevented Harold from seeking another interview, he found it impossible to detach himself entirely from the spot which enshrined the idol of his hopeless fondness. Combe Priory, unfortunately, was within an hour's ride of Dolvellyn, and thither, unknown, and unsuspected, except by his mother, who concealed to herself the knowledge she had accidentally obtained of his proceedings, Harold often repaired, when the dim shade of evening had invested every object. Favored by its friendly obscurity, he would remain for hours, gazing on the dwelling of Gabrielle, well recompensed if he could obtain a transient view of her lovely form, as she passed before the windows of her apartment, or glided in the soft moonlight, along the garden, leaning on the arm of the youngest Miss Berrington, a beautiful and amiable girl, to whom Gabrielle, since her arrival at the Priory, had become much attached.

The solitary visits of Harold were

at length no longer repaid by the sight of her who prompted them, and on enquiry, he learnt, that Mrs. Berrington had become the mother of a babe, who only survived a few days. That her own health was in a very precarious state, and as change of air was considered absolutely necessary for its restoration, the whole family were going to a seat of Colonel Leslie's, in Devonshire, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey. He heard, too, that notwithstanding the delicate situation of his wife, Berrington, since his return, had been engaged in a low intrigue, which had become the general theme of discourse, in the neighbourhood of the Priory, and had reached the ears of Sir Godfrey, between whom and his son, a violent quarrel had consequently ensued, which the imprudence of those about her had communicated to Gabrielle. "And it is thought, my Lort," added his informer, "that the alarm it occasioned the poor

Laty, was the cause of her peing taken ill perfore her time, as well as of the death of her chilt."

Harold sighed in bitterness over the hapless lot of the ill-fated Gabrielle, while he felt, that in quitting the Priory, she would take from him his only source of consolation, since, though denied her society, it was some satisfaction to be near the place she inhabited. The idea of her departing, without his being once more able to behold her, was intolerable, particularly, as in the present state of her health, many circumstances might intervene to forbid their ever again meeting; and for some days, his mind was occupied in devising means to obtain a glance of her, however transient, before she departed. Chance, which sometimes favors an apparently hopeless cause, produced that, which the best laid plans, would, perhaps, have fruitlessly laboured to effect.

Some business, relating to the estate

of Dolvellyn, compelled Lord Harold to ride over to Neath, and on returning, through the village of Britton Ferry, an involuntary impulse led him to strike out of the turnpike, into a bye road, which led much nearer to the Priory, and on reaching the church-yard he dismounted, and fastening his horse to a tree, entered the rustic cemetry. The soft serenity of an autumnal afternoon, conspired with the seclusion and stillness of the surrounding scene, to diffuse a pensive tranquillity over the mind of Harold, who pursued his way through this lonely mansion of the dead, absorbed in contemplation, when his attention was suddenly excited by the appearance of a grassy mound, beneath the shade of an overhanging lime, which bore on a small tablet this inscription :—"Sacred to the memory of Edward, the infant son of Edward and Gabrielle Berrington, who was born the 2nd of September, 18—, and died on the 8th of the same month."

A few faded flowers strewed the verdant turf, and Harold was still bending over the last earthly bed of the little innocent, his whole soul absorbed in the idea of her to whom it owed existence, when the sound of distant voices caught his ear, and he beheld two ladies approaching through the avenue which led from the church-yard to the Priory, in one of whom he immediately recognized Mrs. Berrington; her feeble frame supported by her young and lovely companion, and looking, herself, like a faded rose which an untimely blight had withered.

A projecting buttress enabled Harold to watch her motions without being himself observed, when he saw her approach the grave of her departed child, and taking from a little basket which hung on the arm of her companion, the last sweet flowers that Autumn twines around his hoary brows, she scattered them on the fairy mound, and kneeling beside it, shed

over the fragrant blossoms the tender tears of maternal affection.

Harold feared to breathe, lest he should lose an accent of that voice which he languished to hear, when in answer to some attempt at consolation, from Miss Berrington, Gabrielle replied :—

"Condemn me not, Charlotte, I beseech you, for indulging an unwarrantable sorrow, I know it is my duty to submit to the will of Heaven, but I should have loved him so tenderly! he would have been such a comfort to me!"—and her voice lost in tears, Gabrielle drooped her lovely head over the lowly memorial which modest affection had erected to her deceased darling.

Unutterably affected, Harold continued to gaze silently upon her, when Charlotte Berrington took the hand of the fair mourner, saying, "My dearest sister, let me intreat you to return home. The sun is already set, and I tremble for the con-

sequences to your delicate health should you remain exposed to the night air."

"One moment more!" exclaimed Gabrielle, "and I will accompany you," and, clasping her white emaciated hands together, she remained for a short time as if absorbed in silent supplication; then, suddenly rising, she placed her arm in that of her companion, and slowly turned away from the grave of the infant Edward, with a long and lingering glance which seemed silently to say,—would to heaven, my child, I slept beside thee!

The heart of Lord Harold comprehended the full meaning of that expressive glance, and with an involuntary burst of feeling, he extended his arms towards her as she quitted the churchyard. In a few moments, her receding figure disappeared from his view, when emerging from his place of concealment, he again sought the grave she had just left, and hastily snatching from it a sprig of myrtle, still wet with the precious tears

which Gabrielle had been shedding, he placed the relic next his heart, and mounting his horse, pensively retraced back the way to Dolvellyn.

CHAP. XXIV.

Slow and heavily, to Harold, moved the dreary hours, after the departure of Gabrielle from Glamorganshire, and his only pleasure was, in frequently visiting the place she had quitted—in lingering amid those shades which had so often sheltered the object of his lonely meditations, and in talking of her to the neighbouring rustics, by whom she was literally adored for her benevolence, her beauty, and her sweetness of manners.

The sum of what he gathered from their artless and unvarnished details, convinced Harold, that in becoming the wife of Berrington, Gabrielle had not secured her own felicity; as his present pursuits and inclinations were all calculated to shock and distress the woman so pure in principle, so delicate in feeling, as the lovely neglected wife of this votary of

low licentiousness, by whom she was treated with an indifference frequently approaching to brutality, and it was the general opinion of those, whose situation near her person gave them the best opportunities for observation, that she was literally dying of a broken heart, the effect of ill-treatment and sorrow.

That of Lord Harold bled with anguish, while listening to these details, but it was to Gabrielle they related, and in lamenting over her destiny, he seemed to lose, in some measure, the sense of his own. Melancholy, however, as was this gratification, he was soon compelled to forego it. Winter set in, with its concomitant inconveniences of bad roads, and bad weather, and confined almost intirely at Dolvellyn, with his mother, whose health was far from good, brooding over the past, and hopeless of the future, he again sunk into a moody and apathetic melancholy, which was nourished by solitude, and threatened the

most serious consequences to him who cherished it. Again had Lady Harold the grief of beholding him pining under the pressure of a despondency which gradually communicated itself to her own spirits, and, unable at length, to endure any longer the cheerless solitude of her present situation, early in the month of February she proposed to Harold their immediate removal to town.

Indifferent as to his place of abode, the latter readily consented to this proposal, and in the course of a few days they were again settled in their mansion in Portman Square, where, anxious to escape from himself, Harold entered with avidity into every species of gaiety, was seen at every place of public amusement, and was admired, caressed, and courted by that fashionable circle whose pursuits he despised, and whose manners he had adopted. Many a youthful heart beat with a quickened pulsation when Harold appeared. Many a maternal eye watched

with fond anxiety Harold's approach. But the attractions of the young, and the skilful manœuvres of the elder ladies were alike lost on him, who might with propriety have exclaimed, in the pathetic language of our modern bard,

> "Oh! pardon, if in crowds awhile
> I waste one thought I owe to thee,
> And self-condemn'd, appear to smile,
> Unfaithful to thy memory."

The lovely image of Gabrielle, as he had last beheld her, drooping in faded beauty over the grave of her child, for ever haunted his imagination, and served as a talisman to keep off all other impressions. The hour of loneliness was to him the hour of sad and tender remembrance, when the scenes of frivolity and dissipation, in which he was plunged, gave place to the recollections of better things, of days, and of a being whose loss he now mourned over in bitterness of spirit.

Of Gabrielle he had known nothing since his arrival in town; when, one morning, as he was slowly sauntering down Bond-street, he heard a sudden exclamation on his name—and, turning hastily round, was accosted by Colonel Leslie. The coolness that had existed between Lady Harold and Gabrielle, since the marriage of the latter, had conspired, with existing circumstances, to prevent any intercourse between the two families; Harold had, consequently, never seen the colonel since his return from Sicily, and, as he entertained the highest esteem and veneration for his character, he was not sorry for this accidental encounter, and readily accepted an invitation to join him in a walk. They accordingly directed their course to the Park—and, after some desultory conversation, Harold ventured, though in faltering accents, an inquiry after Mrs. Berrington.

"I left her," replied the colonel, "in Devonshire, being obliged to come up on

parliamentary business, but shortly expect her in town."

"Her health, I hope, is amended."

Colonel Leslie shook his head. "She would willingly persuade us so; but, either she deceives herself, or seeks to lull the apprehensions of her friends, by deceiving them. For myself, I tremble at her situation."

"Much, I trust," exclaimed Harold, endeavouring to suppress his feelings, "may yet be done for her recovery."

"I might think so, my lord," answered the colonel, "were I less acquainted with the cause; but grief, though a slow, is a sure poison; and from this source, I fear, we must trace the present indisposition of Gabrielle."

Harold was unable to reply; and Colonel Leslie continued—"I do not hesitate in expressing my sentiments to you, because I believe you feel an interest in the welfare of my beloved girl, not much inferior to my own;" and the penetrating

glance of his eye, while he spoke, called a blush to the pale cheek of Lord Harold, which silently confirmed the supposition. The colonel resumed—" I am sorry to say, that the husband of Gabrielle is an unprincipled villain, whose conduct proves him every way unworthy of her mistaken preference."

Harold fervently acquiesced in Berrington's claim to this opprobrious appellation; but he checked himself in his desire of entering upon a detail, which would have proved still more strongly the justness of the title, while the colonel again proceeded—" Though my own wishes, and I thought Gabrielle's likewise, had long pointed another way, I believed Mr. Berrington to be a young man of unblemished honour, and good principles—his family and connections were unobjectionable; and, when my consent was asked, to what I considered a sudden and precipitate marriage, I had no reasonable plea for withholding it. I

was assured by Gabrielle herself that her happiness depended on an immediate union; and though there was, I thought, an apparent inconsistency in her conduct, on this occasion, with her usual delicate sense of propriety, and her natural timidity and reserve, I forebore making any remarks.—They were married; and I have reason for believing that the real character of Berrington was soon disclosed to his dismayed and deluded wife, but I long remained in ignorance of the fact; for, as it is my opinion that young people in their circumstances are best left to themselves, after seeing them settled in their own mansion, I went to my estate in Devonshire, where I soon became immersed in politics, and endeavoured to weaken, in the interest they excited, some of the melancholy recollections attached to my former life."

The involuntary sigh with which Colonel Leslie concluded these words, was echoed by Harold, whose expressive

CHAP. XXV.

In returning through the park, a carriage filled with ladies drove rapidly by Harold, one of whom kissed her hand to him as it passed, and on a second glance he perceived it to be Lady Marchmont. The events which had taken place since they parted had, in a great measure, effaced the enchantress Albina from the mind of her deluded victim, and as the most painful and humiliating reflections were attached to every remembrance of Lime Grove, he endeavoured as much as possible to banish the recollection of that unhappy period. The unexpected sight of Lady Marchmont again revived it with redoubled force, and Harold's heart throbbed with a painful anticipation of impending ill, which he struggled in vain to overcome.

The possibility of his again meeting

Albina in London had not before occurred: but reflection now suggested that in those fashionable circles, of which both were such distinguished members, many chances might conspire to throw them together, and even if an extraordinary combination of circumstances should prevent their meeting in public, what would his friends, what must Lord Marchmont himself think of his discontinuing his intimacy with a family from whom he had received so many polite and friendly attentions, without alleging some satisfactory reason for such apparent ingratitude and ill-breeding? It could not be; and shrinking from the prospect of fresh scenes of distress and danger, Harold delayed from day to day a visit which he dreaded, and which he felt convinced he would long since have been expected to pay, when one evening, while at the Opera, he beheld Lord Marchmont enter an adjoining box, who, on perceiving our hero, immediately mo-

tioned for him to join his party. Harold complied with the invitation of the earl, whose friendly expressions of pleasure at this unexpected meeting, again revived in his bosom all the humiliating and compunctious feelings he had endured when at Lime Grove, while, in reply to his gentle reproaches for neglect and absence, he stammered out something about indispensable engagements, the regret he had felt, the pleasure he should have had, &c. which was all taken in good part by his lordship.

In answer to his enquiries after Lady Marchmont, Harold was informed that she was much indisposed; "But I shall tell her," added the earl, "that you will favour her with a personal enquiry to-morrow. It will be very charitable in you; for I never remember Albina's spirits to have been so much depressed from indisposition before."

Harold sighed at an account which seemed to confirm his worst apprehen-

sions, and as it was impossible to refuse a compliance, he repaired, with trembling reluctance, the following morning to St. James's Square, where he was received by Lady Marchmont with the most touching expressions of pleasure; and her languid appearance, her evident dejection, awakened the most poignant emotions of remorse and commiseration in a heart with whose susceptibilities she was but too well acquainted. To work upon these feelings was her present aim, and the wish she expressed for his society was so artfully shadowed by an appearance of humility and friendship, the unhallowed flame of a criminal passion seemed so entirely extinguished in tears of repentant sorrow, that Harold was completely deceived, and, influenced by a mistaken sentiment of compassion, was led almost insensibly to break through the resolution he had formed of avoiding, as much as possible, the enchantress who had undone him.

His visits in St. James's Square became every day more frequent, and in her private parties, as well as at every public place of amusement, Lord Harold was to be seen by the side of the admired and fascinating Countess of Marchmont, who, gratified in beholding his attentions exclusively devoted to herself, did not at present venture to throw aside the disguise of sentiment and decorum which she had now assumed, while she secretly studied to assemble in her mansion every amusement, every pursuit, which could ensnare and fascinate the young and inconsiderate votary of fashionable dissipation. The society which he met in St. James's Square was more conspicuous for elevated rank than propriety of conduct, combined, however, with wit and talent, which rendered it still more dangerous and attractive to a young man of Harold's peculiar genius; whose admiration was too frequently excited at the expence of his better feelings; and those

fine talents and superior intellectual endowments, which had been bestowed for far nobler purposes, were now, by a fatal perversion, rendered subservient to folly, or wasted in frivolous pursuits and unsatisfying pleasures. Gaming and conviviality were the order of the day in St. James's Square, and without being addicted to either, Harold was often led into excesses, which menaced serious consequences to his fortune and constitution, should he persist in their continuance. In vain he wished to detach himself from an intimacy which was attended with so many dangers; the fatal influence of Lady Marchmont still led him back to the scene of dissipation and peril, and with the best natural inclinations, the highest admiration of every noble and virtuous quality, Harold was unconsciously losing ground in the opinion of those who deeply lamented that such rare and exquisite endowments should be thus overshadowed.

The real and exaggerated reports of

her son's conduct, which were communicated to her by some of those officious persons who have no inducement for thus distressing the feelings of others but the pleasure of being the first relaters of something which every one knows but the party concerned, deeply afflicted Lady Harold, and her own remarks upon the subject of her disquietude did not serve to allay it. She saw beneath the veil of thoughtless gaiety he had lately assumed, the secret pangs of a perturbed and discontented spirit; and when the moment of revelry was gone by, his faded cheek, his languid and desponding manners, silently indicated that the "canker worm" of care and sorrow was secretly preying upon his heart. With tears of maternal anxiety Lady Harold mildly remonstrated on the ill effects which late hours and dissipation had evidently produced upon him, and ventured to hint her disapprobation of his frequent visits in St. James's Square.

Harold, faintly smiling, affected to treat his mother's anxiety very lightly; but finding it could not be thus easily dispelled, he endeavoured to soothe her by repeated assurances, "that she had no cause for apprehension, that his present intimacy in St. James's Square was not the result of inclination but necessity and to save appearances, which he should relinquish the moment he could do it without endangering his future welfare."

"But I dread, Harold," she replied, "the allurements of Lady Marchmont. I dread still more the injury your reputation must sustain from your being seen so constantly in her society."

"On the first point, my dear mother, you may be perfectly easy. Lady Marchmont and myself will never be any thing more than friends, and if the world condemn me, let me at least not find a rigid censor in you."

Convinced that expostulation was useless, Lady Harold did not again revert to

the subject in question, and while she secretly mourned over the change which had taken place in her darling son, she publicly affected to disbelieve the reports which were circulated concerning him, while her pious and affectionate heart sought for support and consolation, in imploring from the fountain of all goodness the restoration of his peace, and the conviction of his errors.

Some time elapsed without producing any material incident in the life of Harold, whose situation became every day more critical and dangerous. It was not enough for Lady Marchmont to engross exclusively his time and his attentions to herself, to behold him daily more and more estranged from those friends who it was impossible should ever be included in the number of her own. Even the destruction of his peace, the ruin of his fame were inferior considerations when put in comparison with her present views, which aimed at nothing less than the

entire immolation of her devoted victim. Confiding in her knowledge of his generous and romantic principles, she secretly flattered herself, that if once released from her present ties by legal authority, Harold would consider himself under an obligation to bestow his hand upon the woman, who had (as he supposed) sacrificed her honour and the world's opinion to an attachment for him.

With this view, Albina secretly endeavoured to give as much notoriety as possible to Harold's intimacy in St. James's Square; eagerly caught at every pretext for inducing him to appear with her in public, where, by artfully appropriating his whole attention to herself, she succeeded in directing that of every other person toward him. In private her manners assumed a very different aspect; there all was an affectation of sentiment and sorrow, a dread of public censure and a conduct the most guarded and ap-parently correct, while trembling [illegible]

some unforeseen attachment on the part of Harold should annihilate her present hopes and projects, she watched his every look and action with a jealous and scrutinizing eye, and artfully sought, by the power of her charms and fascinations, to entangle him in new chains.

But to renew again the guilt and misery of Lime Grove was repugnant to every feeling of a heart, which, though erring, was not abandoned, and the spells of the enchantress had hitherto been essayed in vain; whether they would have continued equally powerless during a longer period was a point which still remained to be decided, when an unexpected incident gave a new turn to his fate and feelings.

One morning, Harold accompanied Lady Marchmont and her party to an exhibition of paintings in Pall Mall, and after lounging about the rooms for an hour or two, they proposed returning home, when, as he was preparing to

follow the rest of the party, who were already seated in the carriage, a barouche suddenly drove up, with three ladies, in one of whom he immediately recognized Mrs. Berrington, who, on perceiving him, drew down her veil, and turned her head toward the other side from that where he stood intently gazing upon her. He had not, however, much time for observation; for the voice of Lady Marchmont calling on him to enter the carriage restored him to a sense of his situation; but he had scarcely complied when, by some unskilful manœuvre of the earl's coachman, as they passed, the two carriages got entangled together, and Berrington's horses being young and mettled, began kicking and plunging in a frightful manner. The situation of Gabrielle (who on the first alarm had sunk fainting to the bottom of the barouche) absorbed every other idea in the mind of Harold, and heedless of the shrieks of Lady Marchmont, he sprang from the carriage, and hastening through

the crowd whom the accident had drawn about them, approached the barouche on the opposite side, at the same time calling on some of the bye-standers to follow him, and at the imminent danger of his life at length succeeded in cutting away the traces.

The exertions of those around had by this time secured the infuriated animals, whose plunging had broken the front part of the vehicle to atoms, when trembling with apprehension, Harold approached Gabrielle, who still laid insensible in the carriage, and bore her in his arms to an adjoining shop, followed by another gentleman, with the Miss Berringtons, who had been her companions in this adventure.

Happily, Mrs. Berrington had sustained no injury but that of terror, which her delicate frame and weak nerves had been unable to support, and an application of the usual remedies soon restored

her to recollection; but, on beholding Harold, who was bending over her with looks of acute anxiety, her eyes again closed, and she sank once more into the supporting arms of Charlotte Berrington.

The latter, who imagined the emotion of her sister was occasioned by the remembrance of recent danger, endeavoured to compose her fluttered spirits by assurances of safety, mingled with warm eulogiums on the young nobleman, (for such she understood Harold to be,) to whose courage and presence of mind, they were, she had been assured, chiefly indebted for their preservation. Gabrielle at length raised her head from the bosom of the lovely Charlotte, and after thanking Harold for the services he had rendered them, in a manner which convinced him she could have wished to dispense with the obligation it imposed, added, "that she would give his lordship no farther

trouble, except to order one of her servants to call a coach, as she was desirous of immediately returning home."

Inexpressibly hurt by her manner, Harold complied in silence; and as he returned to inform her the coach was waiting, the gentleman who had accompanied him into the house, and who had been to examine the extent of the damage which was done to Mrs. Berrington's carriage, again entered; in whom the latter immediately recognized an old friend of her uncle, and with many expressions of pleasure at the unexpected rencontre, requested he would accompany them home. Her servant now appeared, when Gabrielle coldly wishing Lord Harold good morning, offered her hand to the stranger to conduct her to the coach. Stupified with contending feelings, Harold remained rooted to the spot where he was standing, till the soft accents of Charlotte Berrington recalled his scattered senses, as she again

thanked him for his attentions, and politeness compelled him to escort them to the coach, where he beheld Gabrielle leaning pensively back, her face covered with a handkerchief, which she did not remove as Harold approached; who having seen her companions safely seated, silently bowed to the party as he closed the door, and mechanically took the way back to Portman-square.

In the present state of his feelings, it was a relief to Harold that his mother was this day engaged to dine out, as it obviated the necessity for any explanation of his too apparent disorder, and in the solitary hours that ensued, he had ample leisure to reflect upon the events of the morning, which did, indeed, supply—

"Room for meditation even to madness."

That the distant and almost disdainful manners of Gabrielle had been occasioned by seeing him in the party of Lady

Marchmont, he had no doubt, and though conscious that he had by his reprehensible conduct deservedly rendered himself amenable to censure, yet to meet a rigid judge in her, who had, in some measure, been its primary cause, in her whose image still retained all its ascendancy over his heart, inflicted upon that heart a pang such as it had never before known.

In reflections like these, Harold passed the dreary hours, till the sound of the clock striking ten, reminded him of an appointment he had made to join an evening party in St. James's square, and though little disposed for company, some apology he considered was due to Lady Marchmont for his sudden and certainly unpolite desertion in the morning, and he therefore, though reluctantly, hastened to fulfil his engagement.

On entering the drawing-room, Harold remarked an unusual flush upon Albina's cheek, and resentment sparkled in her eyes, while in reply to his apologies for

quitting her so abruptly, she sarcastically exclaimed, "Oh, my lord, no excuses are necessary for yielding to the power of an attraction which it was not in human nature to have withstood."

"No doubt, but beauty in distress possesses irresistible attractions," replied Harold; who, knowing Lady Marchmont was unacquainted with the person of Mrs. Berrington, flattered himself she had not discovered for whom he had deserted her, but in this hope he was mistaken. The extreme emotion he had evinced at the first commencement of the accident, produced an inquiry from Albina to whom the carriage belonged, and his desperate exertions for her preservation, the almost agonized anxiety he testified concerning her, convinced her ladyship that in the fair stranger she beheld his long idolized and lamented Gabrielle. Of the influence still possessed by this hated and formidable rival, over the heart and feelings of

Harold, his present conduct afforded undeniable evidence, and burning with jealousy and resentment, Lady Marchmont was now only withheld from openly expressing them by the presence of those around her.

Though secretly provoked at these tacit indications of a displeasure whose source he easily divined, Harold sought by every possible expression of attention to sooth the indignant feelings of the incensed Albina, but they were received with an appearance of sullen sentiment, and finding she was not at this moment accessible to any other resentment, he soon stole away from the party, and wearied and desponding returned home.

CHAP. XXVI.

Anxious to know if Gabrielle had experienced any ill effects from the accident of the preceding day, Harold called the following morning on Colonel Leslie, whom he had not seen for some time, and by whom he was now received with his accustomed appearance of cordiality, while he prevented the intended inquiries of his young friend, by saying—

"I have to thank you, my lord, I find, for the safety, if not the life, of my beloved niece, whom you rescued yesterday from a most perilous situation."

"Mrs. Berrington, I hope," replied Harold, "is no worse for the alarm she then sustained?"

"I trust not;" answered the colonel, "though there certainly was much cause for terror, and I am almost as angry with

Gabrielle as is her lovely sister Charlotte."

"For what reason, colonel?" anxiously asked Lord Harold.

"For treating you in so ungracious a manner, as from Charlotte's account, she appears to have done. It was unlike Gabrielle," continued the colonel more seriously, "and I can only offer one excuse in her behalf; the conduct of her husband renders every precaution requisite on her part to avoid even the suspicion of impropriety, and the attentions of a young man of Lord Harold's confessed gallantry, might give rise to dangerous and unjust surmises."

While the colonel spoke, Harold's heart swelled to unbosom its sorrows and its faults to this inestimable friend, but honor and delicacy forbade; and as it was a theme too painful to be dwelt upon, he affected to laugh it off, and changed the conversation by inquiring,

"If the sisters of Berrington were informed who he was?"

"Certainly not;" replied the colonel, nor shall any precaution be omitted to keep this knowledge from them. My own information was received from Gabrielle herself."

"And has Berrington testified no curiosity on the subject?" asked Harold.

"None; he coolly remarked, that it was a devilish bold fellow who would risk his neck in such an adventure. His chief concern seems to have been about the carriage, and, on my soul, I believe the preservation of his lovely wife was only a secondary consideration."

Harold replied by a sigh, and at that moment a gentleman who had appointed to see the colonel on business being announced, he was rising to take his leave, when the latter prevented him, saying, "I shall only be detained a few minutes, and if you will step into the next room

you will find books or a pen, should you feel an inclination to woo the tuneful Nine."

"I will wait your leisure, colonel," replied Harold, entering the library, when the first object he beheld was Mrs. Berrington, reading by a table at the further extremity of the apartment, who, on raising her eyes at the opening of the door, recognized him with an half suppressed exclamation of astonishment. To retreat was impossible, and Harold, as he approached her, apologized to Gabrielle for his intrusion, by abruptly stating the real cause. Long habituated to self-command, Mrs. Berrington soon recovered from her momentary confusion, and motioned him to take a seat; when the interval of silence which ensued was passed in a mutual and mournful contemplation of the ravages produced in the appearance of each, from the combined effects of corporeal and mental suffering.

In their hurried interview of the preceding day, Harold had only an opportunity for a transient observation of Gabrielle, and that at a time when she was still overcome by terror and recent indisposition; but he now beheld in her attenuated form, in the hectic glow upon her cheek, and in her slight, but incessant cough, sufficient cause to authorize the apprehensions of her friends; yet still she was beautiful almost beyond humanity, and while gazing upon her, every sentiment of Harold's heart was absorbed in pity and tenderness.

To his earnest and respectful inquiries of "Whether she had experienced any ill effects from her yesterday's alarm?" Gabrielle answered in the negative; adding, after a moment's silence, "I am told, my lord, my manners on this occasion were not thought consistent with the due sense of the obligation your service has conferred. It probably might be so, for I was under the influence of

many painful and contending emotions. which are apt to prevent a clear discrimination of what mode of conduct propriety enjoins. If therefore, my lord, I then appeared to you ungrateful or insensible, forgive me now. I would not willingly offend or distress the feelings of one who has my good wishes for his welfare." And, as she spoke, Gabrielle extended her white emaciated hand to Harold, who, unable to reply, pressed it to his lips, while a few drops, wrung by intense feeling from his oppressed heart, fell silently upon it.

A long silence succeeded, in which the mind of Gabrielle seemed to revolve some subject of peculiar interest; and, she at length said, in a low voice and with downcast eyes, "There is a circumstance, my lord, on which I have long been desirous to address you; and I gladly avail myself of the opportunity which our present unexpected meeting affords for this purpose. I am shortly,"

she added, "going to leave this country for Sicily."

"Sicily!" groaned Harold, in bitterness of spirit, and unable at this moment to endure the recollections which the mention of it awakened.

"It is my native air," resumed Mrs. Berrington; "and, in the present indifferent state of my health, my friends are inclined to believe that I should find its effects instrumental in its restoration. They are, perhaps, deceived—but, as I regard it as a duty to make a trial of every possible means of recovery, I have yielded to their wishes, and shall quit England as soon as Colonel Leslie can accompany me."

"Oh, may the event be propitious!" exclaimed Harold, fervently. "May every favouring power attend the hope-inspired voyage, and crown the expectations of your anxious friends."

"I thank your lordship, for these good wishes," replied Mrs. Berrington, in a

tone of suppressed feeling. "But, to resume the subject I began: It will, probably, be a long period ere we meet again, if indeed we ever more should do so; and I would, therefore, take this opportunity of requesting of Lord Harold the restoration of a portrait, which accident formerly placed in his possession, and which, from succeeding events, must long since have lost its value."

"And what motive can prompt so cruel a request?" exclaimed Harold, with much emotion.

"A sense of duty, my lord, which suggests the impropriety of Mr. Berrington's wife permitting any other person to possess her resemblance. Every sentiment of honour and delicacy demand its restoration; nor do I see why your lordship should desire to retain a *memento* of feelings and incidents, long since consigned to oblivion."

"I confess it to be a weakness," replied Harold, in a melancholy accent,

"to desire its detention; yet, how shall I summon sufficient resolution to resign my sole treasure and consolation. Oh, Gabrielle! (for I cannot address you by the detested name of Berrington,) did you but know how dear it is to me—how many hours of solitary wretchedness I have beguiled, while gazing on thy sweet resemblance, you would not thus seek to deprive me of this feeble image—this all of love and happiness that is now left me."

"Forbear, my lord," exclaimed Gabrielle, reproachfully; "you forget that you are not now addressing the beauteous and deceitful violator of every thing sacred and honourable in woman; but, one who has a title to your respect.—Changed as you are, Harold, I would not willingly suppose you capable of insulting me."

Stung by an accusation which he so little merited, Harold was half inclined to leave her in this erroneous opinion;

but the altered appearance of Gabrielle—the idea that they might never more meet, softened his heart, and he hastily replied, "I see, too well, Gabrielle, that you distrust my intentions—that you believe my principles totally depraved. Yet, low as he is sunk in your opinion, Harold is not quite the villain you suspect. The form of her who awoke his first sigh is not to be approached with an unhallowed thought; and, in those solitary moments, when her dear resemblance has been his only comfort, he has gazed on it, as the trembling and despairing wretch would gaze on the celestial vision, which is sent to speak peace to his departing spirit. Oh, then, no more reproach me with what is past. Even angels are susceptible of pity, and did you know all, my Gabrielle, you would pardon and compassionate the unhappy Harold."

"Most sincerely, my lord," replied Mrs. Berrington, "do I pardon every effect of your errors, which may have ex-

tended to me; and, from my soul, do I lament that an infatuation so fatal and destructive should have thus misled a noble nature. Yet, oh, Harold, why not renounce it? Why persist in the error which has undone you?"

Harold was silent—for the language and manners of Gabrielle convinced him that she believed him entirely devoted to a criminal attachment for Lady Marchmont.

One word would have been sufficient to exonerate him from this charge, but his soul disdained the meanness of accusing the woman, who he believed, but for him, had never deviated from the path of virtue; and the sentence that hovered on his lips was lost in the sigh which accompanied its suppression. It was almost involuntarily echoed by Gabrielle, who fixed her eyes upon him with a glance so sad, so expressive of heartfelt regret, that, completely subdued by its touching influence, Harold could

have knelt to her, as to some being of a higher sphere, mourning over the frailties and sufferings of humanity. A momentary silence succeeded—when, as if secretly distrusting her own fortitude, Gabrielle, in a hurried manner and tremulous voice, again repeated her former request to Harold, who, for an instant, seemed to hesitate in his reply. Then, hastily approaching her, he exclaimed, with extreme emotion—" Gabrielle, you are obeyed. Here is the portrait—and never, oh, never may you experience the pang which now rends it, as I thus tear your cherished resemblance from my heart !"

As he ceased speaking, Lord Harold drew out the miniature, which was suspended to a black ribbon round his neck, and, after gazing upon it for a few minutes, with an expression of mingled tenderness and despair, he placed it in the trembling hand of Gabrielle, exclaiming, " Thou sweet and precious pledge

of love and innocence, farewell! In all his wanderings, in all his sufferings, thou hast never been relinquished; and, in resigning thee now, Harold no longer retains even a vestige of the happiness he has lost."

At this moment approaching footsteps were heard; and Mrs. Berrington had scarcely time to consign the portrait to her bosom, when Colonel Leslie entered, who apologized to Harold for detaining him so long. "But I perceive," he added, "you have not been destitute of a companion."

"I found Mrs. Berrington here," replied Harold, making a violent effort to appear composed, "who has kindly favoured me with her company while I waited your return."

"To confess the truth, my dear uncle," said Gabrielle, "I came with an intention of having a long *tête-à-tête* with you this morning; but my time is now expired, for I am engaged to go with Amelia and

Charlotte to the Panorama, and I know not where beside. In the evening, however, I shall be at home."

"At seven, then, I will be with you," answered the colonel. And now, my lord, will you accompany me in a ride?"

Harold consented; and Mrs. Berrington's carriage being announced, politeness obliged him to attend her to it. Not a word was spoken in crossing the hall; but, as Harold assisted her in, he fervently pressed the hand he held, and, in a low voice, pronounced—"Farewell!"

Gabrielle replied not, but she put her handkerchief to her face; and, as she threw herself upon the seat, a stifled sob caught the ear of Harold, who, impressed with the idea of a final adieu, continued for some moments to gaze on the receding carriage with the most poignant emotions, till a sudden turn removed it from his view, when he went back, slowly and dejectedly, to fulfil his engagement with Colonel Leslie.

The horses were not yet arrived; and, while they stood at a window waiting for them, the colonel asked Harold "whether his niece had made *l'amende honorable*, for her ungracious manners, the preceding day?"

"Mrs. Berrington," he replied, "distressed me by some apologies, which were totally unnecessary; but our conversation turned principally on her intended voyage to Sicily, in which you, I hear, colonel, are to be her companion."

"Great hopes are entertained of its proving efficacious in her recovery," said Colonel Leslie; "and I could not bear to be separated from her under such circumstances."

"Mr. Berrington, of course, accompanies her?"

"No:—he did not absolutely decline going, but he started so many difficulties when the subject was mentioned, that I would not urge him farther; particularly as Gabrielle expressed no desire for his

attendance. Myself and Charlotte are to be her companions, and Amelia will take charge of her brother's house during her absence."

The horses being now announced, the gentlemen proceeded on their intended ride, which lasted for several hours; during which time the conversation turned on other subjects, and they parted, with a mutual promise of again meeting, before Colonel Leslie quitted town.

CHAP. XXVII.

For some days after his unexpected interview with Gabrielle, Harold continued to absent himself from St. James's Square; and, burning with rage and jealousy for a desertion, which she imputed to the influence of her unconscious rival, Lady Marchmont eagerly waited an opportunity of venting these malignant passions upon Harold, whose increasing coolness and indifference to her attractions had, for some time past, excited her secret displeasure.

This opportunity soon occurred; and the storm, which, upon his entrance, he perceived lowering on her brow, burst forth in a torrent of tears and reproaches, to which Harold listened with mute astonishment; and, when an interval of silence occurred, he gently ventured to remind her ladyship, " that the visits, of

whose discontinuance she now complained, were entirely voluntary. That his friends had lately accused him of devoting to her his time and attentions, to the neglect of his other connexions; and that various indispensable engagements had been the occasion of his late absence from St. James's Square."

"No doubt, my lord," replied the incensed Albina, "you have been much and pleasantly engaged since last we met—but, do you really think, Harold, I am to be thus easily deceived as to the motives of your present conduct? No: we must look for the cause of this sudden change, not in the representations of your friends, not in the hurry of indispensable engagements, but in the natural inconstancy of man, which makes you despise and neglect the woman, who, in sacrificing herself to her affection, has added another to the long list of the victims of seduction and perfidy."

Indignation flashed in the dark and

eloquent eyes of Harold, while Albina thus addressed him; but, he repressed the reproaches which were rising to his lips, and listened, in silent resentment, to her upbraidings of a conduct of which she had herself been the instigator. The natural violence of her disposition, which a practised softness of manners had hitherto concealed from his observation, now displayed itself to Harold in the most bitter and unjust reproaches; and he sighed at the idea of having, by one fatal transgression, subjected himself to the temper of a woman, whose resentment he believed would be no less ardent than her attachments.

Conscious, however, of the high degree of criminality to be imputed to his past conduct, and touched with commiseration for those feelings of slighted tenderness, which he sighed to perceive had a considerable share in exciting the present angry emotions of Lady Marchmont, Harold heard her with patient for-

bearance; and, when a momentary pause gave him an opportunity of speaking, he replied, in an accent of gentleness—" I am well aware, Lady Marchmont, of the original cause of this ill-judged and unjust resentment, which I had hoped would, ere this, have been totally forgotten. I again declare, that nothing could be farther from my thoughts than any intention of offending or slighting you, by a conduct which humanity would have dictated to the rudest and most uncivilized of mankind. I knew you were in no danger, while that of the other party was apparent and extreme; and, had it been the merest stranger in the world—had it been even an enemy, in such circumstances, I should have acted as I then did. Of your right to assume a control over my actions, I will not enter into any discussion, but I candidly confess it is an authority to which I am by no means disposed to submit. Alas! I have already suffered too severely for once yielding my

reason and conduct to the influence of another."

Gentle as was this reproach, it served still further to exasperate Albina; and, shocked and disgusted at a violence and acrimony of temper, of which, till now, he had never suspected the existence, Harold took up his hat, and coolly wishing her ladyship a good morning, hastily retreated from the house. On arriving at home, he was met by Colonel Leslie, who was to leave town the following day, and, in the long conversation which ensued between them, Harold gathered enough to convince him that it really was Gabrielle herself, who, at the masquerade at Lime Grove, had breathed the warning strain which still seemed to vibrate in his ears, and which, had he attended to its friendly admonitions, might have saved him from the subsequent guilt and misery in which he was involved. Deeply affected by this unequivocal proof of the interest she still felt in his fate, he could

with difficulty conceal his emotions from the observation of the colonel; and, as memory retraced the tearful eye, the suppressed tenderness of Gabrielle's manner, at their last interview, his desolate and desponding heart expanded to the soothing idea, that he was not totally despised—not quite disregarded by this secret idol of its affections.

At parting, Colonel Leslie promised Harold a frequent and minute account of his proceedings; and, as he quitted the room, cordially wrung his hand, saying, "Heaven bless you, my dear fellow—and don't be offended at the farewell advice of a friend—to go as little as you can to St. James's Square. You are not the first, to my knowledge, who have been deluded by this syren in angel's form; and your youth and inexperience led you easily into her snares—but delay not, as soon as possible, to detach yourself from an intimacy which your best friends condemn, and which cannot fail to injure

you in the eyes of the world. Once more adieu, and excuse what I have now been saying."

Harold, unable to reply, pressed the hand of the colonel, in token of forgiveness, and farewell; and as the latter disappeared from his view, he felt as if he had parted from Gabrielle again.

The expression which his friend had dropped respecting Lady Marchmont dwelt much upon his mind; and the more he reflected upon the character of Colonel Leslie, his strict and undeviating veracity, and his well known candour and forbearance to others, the more fully was he convinced of something having occurred in the conduct of Albina which justified the assertion. His mother in the account she formerly gave him *might* have been influenced by prejudice, but no such suspicion could be attached to the colonel; and as the drowning wretch will grasp at straws, so Harold eagerly caught at the hope of his having been deceived in the cha-

racter of Lady Marchmont, that the load of guilt which now weighed so heavily upon his heart, was not darkened to a deeper dye by her actual seduction. Worlds would he have considered as well exchanged for such a conviction, and under the impression which the colonel's language had produced, he determined to watch Albina with the most scrutinizing attention.

The latter, who was seriously alarmed, lest the late display of her violent and uncontrolable passions should have the effect of entirely driving Harold from her, unfeignedly regretted a conduct which menaced the total destruction of all her deep laid plans; and when he again made his appearance in St. James's Square, our hero was received by Lady Marchmont with the most graceful and flattering testimonies of pleasure, and nothing was omitted which might efface the impression of a conduct which she artfully imputed

to an excess of sensibility and tenderness.

But the veil which had hitherto obscured Harold's sight, was now removed. In the review of past events, which the suggestions of Colonel Leslie had induced him to take, many things occurred to his recollection, which wore an appearance of design and premeditation on the part of Albina; and no longer blinded by infatuation and the spells of an enchantress, he began to feel distrustful of the motives which now influenced her, and though he affected to be convinced and satisfied by her present excuses and arguments, it was only with a view of removing any restraint which the suspicion of his being undeceived might have forced her to lay upon her future conduct, which must entirely frustrate the scrutiny he now proposed.

In pursuance of this design, Harold now began carefully to study the real cha-

racter of one whom he had as yet only beheld through the dazzling veil which her charms and fascinations had thrown around her: and no longer misled by their bewitching influence, those dark traits in her disposition and temper, which had hitherto eluded his notice, now presented themselves in their real colours to his dismayed and astonished observation. An assumed character, however artfully maintained, will, at times, betray itself through every disguise; and, notwithstanding the attempts of Albina to appear guarded and consistent in all her actions, he saw much levity, much indiscretion in her general behaviour, but nothing could be discerned on which to found any accusation of particular misconduct—and Harold still doubted and trembled.

In conformity, however, with the advice of his revered friend, he gradually became less frequent in his visits in St. James's Square, and avoided, as much as possible, appearing in public in the party of

Lady Marchmont, who, fearful of alienating still further the object of a daily increasing passion, smothered the expression of her resentment, and with a heart burning with jealousy and anger, affected the utmost indifference and unconcern.

Time in the mean while proceeded with sure, though lingering pace, and letters were received from Colonel Leslie, containing the intelligence of their safe arrival in Sicily, and of their being finally settled in the vicinity of the Villa di Marino, in a cottage which Harold well remembered to have frequently admired for its beauty and picturesque situation. "Gabrielle," added the colonel, "testified an unconquerable repugnance to visiting the Villa, and had uniformly declined going thither, though she had several times been as far as the cemetery where the remains of her parents lay interred. We often," continued Colonel Leslie, in another part of his letter, "hear of Lord Harold in this neighbourhood,

where his benevolence and affability have left indelible traces upon the minds of those that knew him, and *L'Illustrissimo Signore Inglese* is never mentioned but in terms of gratitude and respect."

The account given in this epistle of the health of Gabrielle was not calculated to allay the fears of her anxious friends, since they candidly acknowledged that the symptoms of her disorder had not as yet undergone any material alteration; "but I still," continued the colonel, "anticipate much benefit from a delicious climate and salubrious air, as well as from the youth and naturally good constitution of Gabrielle, who suffers with the patience of a martyr, and the resignation of a saint."

Harold sighed over an account which depressed even his sanguine hopes; yet still he tenaciously clung to the belief of her final restoration; for though an unfortunate combination of circumstances had torn two hearts asunder, which were

formed by nature for each other, he could not support with calmness the idea of Gabrielle being thus prematurely lost to a world, which her charms and virtues were alike calculated to embellish and improve.

The summer had now attained its meridian, and Harold, who perceived his mother secretly pining for the country, proposed their removal to Llanivar, alleging, as his motive for this choice, the present residence of Berrington near Dolvellyn, and the reluctance he felt to incur any chance of meeting him under the influence of his existing feelings.

Fondly attached to the beloved abode of so many happy years, Lady Harold gladly acquiesced in the wishes of her son to revisit Wales, and, after several ineffectual attempts had been made on the part of Lady Marchmont to detain him in town, they bade a willing adieu to the smoke and dust of the metropolis for the invigorating breezes and pure

atmosphere of "Cambria's mountains wild." Here removed from the engulphing vortex of dissipation, and the contagious influence of example and fashion, the versatile and sensitive Harold became again what Nature had originally formed him—the child of genius and of sentiment, whose vivid imagination was alive to every thing grand and beautiful in creation, or in fancy, and whose heart responded only to the sweetest and most ennobling sensations. Restored to solitude and to himself, he looked back to the last few months as to the recollection of a feverish and distressing dream, from which he was but recently awakened, and he experienced a species of wonder at the remembrance of his own delusion. The sweet tranquillity of nature, and the quiet seclusion of his present situation, seemed to communicate a corresponding tone to his mind, and his exhausted feelings sank into a calm which might be termed comparative happiness to him

whose existence had lately been passed only in storms. But one was now impending which fell more heavily upon Harold than any he had yet encountered.

Its approach was foretold by a letter from Colonel Leslie, written under the evident pressure of the most afflicting feelings, containing the dreadful information of all hope of Gabrielle's recovery being annihilated. She was in the last stage of a decline, to which neither medicine nor climate could afford any relief, and whose progress had been so gradual that those about her were only recently convinced of what she had herself been long sensible, the inutility of all human skill to prolong her existence. "Her medical attendants," continued the colonel, "are of opinion that a return to England would only accelerate her fate, and she has herself expressed a wish to continue where she now is during the period that may still remain of her sojourn in this world. To my proposal of sending for her hus-

band, she objected, saying, 'that his presence could not impart any additional comfort to the last hours of her existence, and he would, probably, but little relish a scene which was not calculated for one of his gay and volatile turn. I have,' she added, 'written a letter to be given to him after my decease, which will answer every purpose of farewell and admonition, and which may have greater weight, perhaps, from its being presented under such circumstances.'—Since this declaration of her sentiments," resumed the colonel, "I have ceased to urge a subject which evidently distresses her; for I am unwilling to disturb for a moment the heavenly tranquillity of Gabrielle's mind, so forcibly contrasting with the restless and agonized feelings of her despairing friends."

From the moment he had perused this letter, Harold's resolution was taken, and hastily repairing to his mother's apartment, he presented her with the open

paper, exclaiming, "Gabrielle is dying! and I must set off without delay.—Do not attempt to oppose me," he added, perceiving Lady Harold about to speak: "I will see her again, though all the powers of Heaven and earth were combined against my design! Again hold her to my heart, though the next moment saw me laid breathless at her feet! You weep, my mother"—he continued, on beholding the tears of Lady Harold fall fast on the epistle she was reading, "I am now convinced you pity me—that you will not oppose my wishes."

"Far be it from me, Augustus," she replied, "to deprive you of even the smallest consolation under your present affliction. From my soul I do pity you, and lament the untimely fate of this sweet young creature, against whom I conceived a hasty, perhaps an unjust resentment for an error she has expiated with her life. Oh! Harold, assure her of my perfect reconciliation, of my regret,

my—" tears impeded her utterance, and Harold, whose feelings were wrought up to a degree of intenseness that forbade such an indulgence, gazed with envy on the drops which seemed to relieve her oppressed heart. When she had again recovered the faculty of speech, Lady Harold conjured him to be careful of his health, and to moderate a sensibility which could not benefit Gabrielle, and might be attended with fatal consequences to himself. Harold assured his mother of an adherence to her injunctions, and extorted from her a promise not to reveal to any person the occasion or destination of his journey, which his impatience would not suffer him to delay a moment longer than was required to make a few necessary preparations.

An hour or two sufficed for this purpose; and after a tender and sorrowful farewell of his affectionate and sympathizing parent, Harold commenced his melancholy journey, without any attend-

ant, as he was determined to leave no clue which might lead to a discovery of his present intentions. Trembling lest the hand of death should snatch his victim ere he could again behold her, Harold scarcely allowed himself an interval of rest or refreshment till he reached Falmouth, where, happily for his impatience, he found a vessel under orders for the Mediterranean, which was to sail the following day, when, having secured a passage, extreme exhaustion compelled him to seek a short repose to recruit his wearied frame, and procure a temporary relief to his harassed spirits. At an early hour he was summoned to go on board the vessel, which was shortly afterwards under weigh, and before noon, the white cliffs of Britain once more disappeared from his view.

The recollections which revived in his mind of a similar departure, under circumstances of a very different nature from the present, did not tend to exhili-

rate the already depressed spirits of Lord Harold, and the farther he advanced on his voyage, the more oppressive his sensations became; but when the vessel entered the port of Messina, the remembrances which were recalled by the scene itself, and by a view of the surrounding objects, quite overcame his fortitude, and hastily retreating into the cabin, he suffered the tears of long suppressed feeling to drop unheeded into the waves below, as he leant pensively from the narrow window, absorbed in the painful reflections to which these remembrances had given birth.

After staying a few hours only at Messina, Harold proceeded forward to the Villa di Marino, where, having taken up his quarters at the village inn, by whose inmates he was immediately recognized with surprise and pleasure, he dispatched a boy to the cottage where Gabrielle resided, with a message to Colonel Leslie, informing him that a gentle-

man from England requested to see him on business of importance, and was then waiting at the inn.

The lad, who had received a strict injunction not to say from whom he came, was faithful to the orders which were given him, and, equally surprised and alarmed, the colonel repaired to the place appointed, where his emotions were not much decreased by the sight of Harold, whose appearance was but too indicative of mental disorder—and an involuntary exclamation of "Good God! my lord, what brings you hither?" escaped his lips as he entered—"Ere I answer that question, my dear colonel," faltered Harold, "tell me if Gabrielle still lives?—If there is any hope?"—An expression of the deepest anguish overspread the features of the colonel.

"She still lives," he answered; "but a few weeks, perhaps a few days, must terminate, thus prematurely, an existence so precious to those that love her—an

existence which has so long been the sole blessing of mine."

An involuntary burst of sorrow concluded these words, and it was some time before he could repeat to Harold his former question of "What had brought him to Sicily?"

"I came," he replied, after a momentary silence, and with the desperate calmness of despair, "to catch the last sigh of her I love—of her, whose image, amidst all its wanderings, has never been absent from my heart."

"What mean you, my lord?" asked the colonel, his countenance assuming an air of severity—"What construction must I give to language so unworthy of yourself, so derogatory to the now almost sainted being you profess to value?"

"Condemn me not unheard, I beseech you, colonel," exclaimed Harold, imploringly—"There is a long and melancholy tale, if you will vouchsafe me your attention, which must convince you how

greatly I have been wronged—wronged by the man I trusted—by the woman who had pledged to me her virgin vows of tenderness and truth. The past cannot now be recalled; but when you know all, you will, I hope, be inclined to exonerate me from your present suspicions."

The colonel signified to Harold his readiness to hear any explanation he desired; and the latter accordingly entered upon a brief but comprehensive detail of those events in his past life connected with his attachment to Gabrielle, from its first commencement to the present hour. Of Lady Marchmont, he said no more than was necessary to justify himself from a charge of deliberate seduction; and to Colonel Leslie, who was well acquainted with Albina's character from the report of one, who, like Harold, had been the victim of her sorceries, the little he said was more than sufficient to convince him that his young friend was not the most

culpable person in this affair. The simple "and unvarnished tale" of the latter affected him greatly, and when he had ceased speaking, the colonel extended his hand, saying, "Forgive my hastiness, dear Harold, and believe me when I assure you that I sincerely sympathize in a fate which was apparently so little deserved. Yet surely some art must have been resorted to—some treachery employed to produce a conduct so inconsistent with the character of Gabrielle Montgomery."

"I have sometimes been inclined to think so myself, and though now unavailing, as far as my happiness is concerned, it would afford me a melancholy satisfaction to know I was not sacrificed to caprice and inconstancy."

"You shall be satisfied, then, my lord," replied Colonel Leslie; "for well am I convinced that Gabrielle does not deserve condemnation. She was, I fear,

herself deceived by the villain who imposed on you."

"Shall I, then," exclaimed Harold, "be permitted to behold her again?"

"Assuredly, my lord. Sanctioned by my presence no impropriety can exist, and woe to that man who shall venture to sport with the fame of my angel."

"But may not Miss Berrington—" said Harold, hesitatingly.

"Do not be uneasy about Charlotte," replied the colonel: "She is next to my Gabrielle the best of human beings, and too tenderly attached to her sister to justify your apprehensions. Did you know her as well as I do, you would grieve to have entertained any."

Harold, with tears of gratitude, thanked the colonel for his kindness, and the latter shortly afterwards departed with a promise of informing his friend as soon as he had prepared Gabrielle for an interview.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Early the following evening Harold received a note from Colonel Leslie in these words:—

"I have acquainted Gabrielle, my dear Harold, with your arrival, who appeared I thought gratified by the intelligence, and as she declares herself quite equal to the effort we shall expect your return with the bearer of this. I have only to intreat you will exert your fortitude in the approaching interview, and endeavour to control those feelings you cannot entirely repress. Alas! it is the daily and hourly task of

Your sincere friend,

Leslie."

Accompanied by his little conductor, a peasant girl, who resided in the vicinity of the cottage, Harold immediately set out for the rustic abode of Gabrielle, which was situated at an equal distance

between the Villa di Marino and the village inn. During their short walk, he endeavoured to collect sufficient fortitude for the trial that awaited him; but every step which bore him nearer Gabrielle served to increase his agitation, and when he reached the gate leading from the road to a small-lawn in front of the house, he was compelled to lean against it for support.

Colonel Leslie, who had observed his approach, came out to meet him, and remarking his pallid looks, and the universal tremor of his frame, offered him his arm, and as they proceeded towards the cottage, he again earnestly conjured him not to suffer his fortitude to desert him in a moment when it was so much required.

Harold promised to be composed; but, as they entered the little vestibule, the pulsation of his heart became so violent as almost to impede respiration; and the colonel, who dreaded the effect his ap-

pearance might have upon Gabrielle, in his present state of agitation, insisted on his sitting down for a few moments, while he hastened to procure him some restorative. Harold complied, for he was overcome as much by exhaustion as from excess of feeling, having scarcely taken any refreshment for the last four and twenty hours. The wine he was now obliged, by Colonel Leslie, to swallow, proved efficacious in reviving his corporeal and mental powers; when the latter, as soon as he saw him somewhat restored, silently motioned him to approach, and, on his softly unclosing a door at the other side of the vestibule, Harold beheld Gabrielle reclining on a sofa at the extremity of a small but elegant apartment, her whole attention apparently absorbed in a book she was reading.

None of the usual insignia of sickness or of death surrounded their lovely and devoted victim. A profusion of living flowers decorated the room, in which

(not far from the couch where she lay,) stood her harp, as if she had but recently awakened its melodious sounds; nor were her favourite authors banished from her boudoir, where every object wore an air of cheerfulness, very different from the gloom and melancholy that usually distinguish the apartment of an invalid.

Not less pleasing and touching was the appearance of Gabrielle herself, whose dress, though destitute of ornament, was arranged with her accustomed simple elegance, and there was in the *tout ensemble* of her person a kind of unearthly beauty, the natural consequence of her peculiar disease, which those who have witnessed can alone imagine.

Harold approached, unable to speak; and, sinking on one knee beside her, clasped to his heart the hand she extended towards him, as he entered, and bathed it with tears; when, apparently distressed by his emotion, Gabrielle gently demanded the cause.

"Oh, wherefore can you ask me," he replied, "when I behold you thus, like some celestial being, hovering on the confines only of that world, from which you are preparing to take a final flight."

"And why, Harold," exclaimed Gabrielle, a celestial smile irradiating her pale, yet charming features, "should that affect you thus? We are not wont to commiserate the wayfaring and wearied traveller at the moment when he is approaching the haven of refreshment and repose. I am that worn and wearied wanderer through a cheerless and toilsome journey, yet you would cruelly desire to detain me from a home of permanent and everlasting rest."

"I know," answered Harold, endeavouring to speak composedly, "that it is for ourselves only we must lament—but then, so young, so lovely a victim—"

His voice again failed him; and Gabrielle seeing how much he was affected, endeavoured to divert his attention to a

less painful subject; while she pointed out to his observation the lovely prospect from the windows of the apartment, which descending to the floor, and breathing fragrance from the flowers that entwined them, commanded an extensive view of the intervening valley, and the blue and distant waters of the Mediterranean sea.

"This apartment," continued Gabrielle, "has always been my favourite, since I first came hither, and, with an adjoining bed-chamber, was fitted up for my reception. Here I live, surrounded by my friends, my books, my flowers—continually gratified by a view of nature, in her loveliest forms, and anticipating still brighter scenes awaiting me in those regions whither I am now hastening. Thus circumstanced, I had one thing only to implore of heaven. My wish is accomplished;" and the glance of her dark and eloquent eye tacitly revealed to Harold what that wish had been.

"Oh, Gabrielle," he involuntarily ex-

claimed, "and couldst thou, almost a spirit in bliss, deign to vouchsafe a wish, of which the erring and miserable Harold was the object? Oh, say but that again, and I will for ever bless you."

A momentary agitation disturbed the calm serenity of Gabrielle's features, while he thus addressed her, and the hectic of an instant crossed her cheek, but it was quickly gone, and she replied, in a firm accent, and with an air which seemed impressed with more than mortal dignity —"Harold, this is not a time for dissimulation. Human ties extend not beyond the grave, and to me, they must shortly be for ever dissolved: but there is a happier world, where those that love may hope to be reunited; and it would sweeten my last moments could I indulge the fond belief of meeting Harold there."

She paused—but he was unable to reply; and, after a moment's silence, Gabrielle again resumed. "I repeat, that I have wished for, have earnestly suppli-

cated to behold you once more, in the fond, perhaps the vain hope of being still able to detach you from a criminal inclination, which has finally separated us in this world, and may, I fear, for ever divide us in another. Oh, Harold, let me not implore in vain. It is the dying voice of her you once loved with a pure and virtuous passion. Of her, whose heart her love for you has broken; which conjures you not to be your own destroyer—to fly from the fatal, fatal creature, who has undone us both."

"Almighty Powers!" exclaimed Harold, in a tone of inexpressible anguish, "what does this language mean? What criminal inclination separated us? What lingering affection for the rejected Harold had power to touch the heart of the willing wife of Mr. Berrington?"

"Never had Gabrielle," she replied, "become that miserable wife, if a guilty and dishonourable connection had not,

nied them to the opera on the evening in question, and afterwards supped at their house, where a moment of purposely contrived inebriety placed *them* in their true light, and shame, aided by his sinister representations, prevented any explanation of a circumstance which probably laid the first foundation for the success of his infamous designs. But, pardon me, dearest Gabrielle, for thus interrupting your recital, and let me beseech you to proceed."

We are already informed of the events which took place previous to Harold's departure from England, and it only now remains to account for those which occurred during his absence from that country. After introducing his deluded and unsuspecting friend, to one of the most seducing and dangerous of her sex, Berrington became his first accuser. The well known character of Lady Marchmont, Harold's supposed silence and neglect, and the reports of some Sicilian

correspondents to whom Berrington had pretended to confide the secret of his own invention, all tended to confirm Gabrielle in her fatal error.

The return of the latter to England unaccompanied by his friend, without one token of remembrance or regret from Harold, (for it is scarcely necessary to say his letter to Gabrielle was never delivered,) was the finishing manœuvre in this well executed scheme of art and deception, and its result was the two epistles which it will be remembered were addressed by Miss Montgomery to Lord Harold and his mother, and which hastened the departure of the former from Sicily.

Berrington, in the mean time, was a constant visitor in Harley Street, where he always met with the most friendly and flattering reception. The society of one who so greatly possessed her confidence, soon became necessary to the comfort of Gabrielle, whose desolate heart sighed

for support and consolation. Berrington saw the advantage he had obtained, and gradually assumed a more impassioned language. It did not seem to offend, and he was emboldened to speak in still plainer terms, and to plead a long cherished and long concealed affection, which nothing but existing circumstances, he said, should ever have induced him to reveal, and which, if she desired it, should be still confined to his own breast, however destructive it might eventually prove to his happiness, and perhaps to his existence.

The suit thus artfully urged, was neither entirely encouraged nor actually rejected by the deluded Gabrielle. The peace of a man who had testified such a lively interest in her welfare, could not be totally indifferent, and the anguish she had herself endured from disappointed affection, rendered her more reluctant to inflict those pangs upon another.

While in this state of fluctuating

emotions, a report reached her of Harold's expected return, accompanied (as she was informed,) by Lord and Lady Marchmont; distrustful of her own resolution, should she again behold him apparently contrite, and seeking her forgiveness for the past, yet dreading still more the effects which a contrary conduct would produce upon her mind; actuated alike by wounded pride and disappointed tenderness, and indignant at his supposed neglect, the heart of Gabrielle became a chaos of contending passions, of which the wily Berrington failed not to take advantage, artfully urging his own fervent and disinterested affection, at the same time that he represented the conduct of Harold in the most odious and degrading light.

The effect of his arguments was but too successful. Assailed at once by pity and resentment, the wavering resolution of Gabrielle could not sustain the conflict, and Berrington availed himself of a propitious moment of mingled softness and

indignation, to wring from her a reluctant consent to a precipitate and inauspicious union.

When Gabrielle had proceeded thus far in her narrative, she was obliged to pause, overcome by the various emotions which pressed upon her recollection, and tears excited by sad and unavailing remembrance, chased each other down her cheeks; hastily she wiped them away, and resumed, as follows—

"It was not long after my unfortunate marriage, before Berrington threw aside the mask of virtue and tenderness, which he had assumed, and his real character stood displayed in its true colours to my dismayed and shuddering imagination. Oh, Harold, could you but know the misery of that bitter moment, you would confess that it amply revenged you for all your wrongs. In relinquishing, from a sense of principle, the only man I ever loved, I had resigned my best hopes of happiness,

but I still anticipated a tender friend and endearing companion in the husband of my choice. What then were my sensations, when I discovered that husband to be a libertine, whose chief motive for marrying me had been the fortune which I brought him, and in whom I was daily shocked by some new instance of profligacy and neglect, which convinced me that however culpable he might have been whom I had relinquished, the man to whom I was now united was not more deserving.

"My reproaches for his duplicity, and my remonstrances at his conduct were laughed at, or treated with contempt by Berrington, who coolly observed, 'that in love and war, all stratagems were lawful,' and had the ungenerous cruelty to reproach me with my affection for Lord Harold, 'to whose indiscretions,' he added, 'I should, doubtless, have been disposed to show a greater degree of lenity.' I will not dwell upon a period of

my life which affords me no other satisfaction in the remembrance but what arises from a conviction of having scrupulously discharged my duty, and neglecting no possible means to effect a reformation in the principles and conduct of my deluded and infatuated husband. The sorrow of beholding my efforts for this purpose unavailing, my constant and ineffectual struggles to eradicate an affection which I now regarded it as criminal to cherish, and my regret and anxiety for one who was, I feared, pursuing a course which must eventually lead to destruction, combined with other causes to reduce me to my present situation.

"I have long been sensible of the inefficacy of all human aid, and weaned by affliction from a world which has in general so many attractions for the young and happy, I look forward to the final close of my short and unfortunate life, not only without reluctance, but

with pleasure. What I have just heard will reconcile me still more to the approaching event; for to have lived now, with the torturing conviction of having wilfully become the victim of treachery and deceit, would be a species of misery to which, I confess, my fortitude is unequal. For you, Harold, many years of happiness are still, I trust, reserved. For you the past presents no changeless and irrevocable doom, and you may yet taste with some being deserving of your virtues, all the joys of social and domestic life; but sometimes when you are thus blest, remember (what she may now dare to tell you,) that no one can ever love Harold like the lost and ill-fated Gabrielle."

Completely exhausted, Mrs. Berrington, as she ceased speaking, sank into the arms of Lord Harold, who unutterably affected; could only silently strain her to his heart, and mingle his tears with those which bedewed the pale, yet

heavenly countenance of Gabrielle, whose respiration alone testified her existence, so motionless and death-like was her aspect.

It was a moment of blissful anguish, which conveyed to the agonized and adoring Harold the assurance that he was still dear to the idol of his affections, attended with a sad conviction of being soon separated from her for ever. An approaching footstep crossing the vestibule awoke him from this indulgence of tenderness and sorrow, and hastily placing Gabrielle (who was incapable of moving) on the sofa, he walked to a window, and affected to be engrossed by the prospect on which the pale moon now shone with a soft and silvery lustre. The intruder was Colonel Leslie, who, with a delicacy which was not lost upon Harold, had forborne by his presence to lay any restraint upon an interview so interesting to his young friend; but whose anxiety for the effect it might produce on the weak

frame of Gabrielle, now led him to hasten its termination.

The appearance of Mrs. Berrington convinced him his apprehensions were not unfounded, and having rung for her attendants, he conducted Harold to another apartment, where the latter, as soon as he had a little recovered from his emotion, detailed every particular of the late conversation to the attentive colonel, who was not ashamed to shed the tears of honest sympathy over the fate of two beings, whom an unfortunate combination of villainy and error had plunged so deep in wretchedness.

Their discourse was interrupted by the entrance of a lovely girl, in whom Harold immediately recognized the fair companion of Gabrielle in the church-yard of Britton Ferry, and who was now introduced by Colonel Leslie as Charlotte Berrington. Notwithstanding her near affinity to the man who had so basely treated him, Harold could not but ac-

knowledge that the countenance of the gentle Charlotte bore the stamp of every kind and amiable disposition, and the looks of regret and sympathy, with which she regarded him, convinced the unhappy lover of the dying Gabrielle, that she knew and pitied his fate.

Supper was now announced, of which Harold declined staying to partake, and accordingly took leave of the colonel and his fair companion, with a promise of breakfasting the following morning at the cottage.

CHAP. XXIX.

Early as was the hour of his appointed visit, Lord Harold was surprised to hear the clock of a neighbouring monastery chiming five as he approached the Cottage di Fioré, the appellation given by Gabrielle to her present residence. None of its inmates, except the domestics, were yet risen, and he accordingly proceeded to the garden, where he continued for some time to pace with slow and noiseless step beneath the windows of Mrs. Berrington's apartment, on which the rays of the rising sun were partially reflected through the luxuriant foliage that embowered the garden.

"The morn (to use the beautiful language of the poet) was in its prime," and under any other circumstances, its balmy fragrance, its reviving freshness, would have communicated sensations of corre-

sponding pleasure to the bosom of one who was wont to hail "her rising sweet" with those delicious emotions which are the genuine offspring of nature and of genius; but absorbed only in the idea of Gabrielle—of Gabrielle, thus prematurely sacrificed to the machinations of a villain, the objects around him were unable to cheer the oppressed heart of Harold, who, lost in melancholy reflections, pursued his walk, regardless of the lapse of time, till he was roused from his reverie by the appearance of Charlotte Berrington at the glass door, which conducted from the little vestibule into the garden, sustaining upon her friendly arm the feeble frame of the fair invalid.

Hastily he advanced to meet them, and a pang of acute anguish thrilled his breast as he silently contrasted the lovely sister of Berrington, blooming in health, and animated with the sprightly graces of youth and cheerfulness, to the drooping

form of Gabrielle, who looked already like the being of another sphere: like one of the fair departed spirits so often and so touchingly described by that poet of the heart, the tender and pathetic Ossian. A soft smile played round her pale lip as she returned the salutation of Harold, and as she took his offered arm, "You see, my lord," she exclaimed, "I am still an early riser, and in fact it is only in the cool hour of morn or evening that I am now capable of any exertion. I generally walk at these seasons for a short time, and I feel at present particularly disposed for a ramble."

The spirits of Harold were too deeply affected to permit him to answer her, and after taking a few turns along the lawn, Gabrielle complained of fatigue, and the party re-entered the house, when the latter retired to her own apartment, and Harold and Charlotte joined the colonel at the breakfast table. As soon as the

repast was finished they again returned to Mrs. Berrington, who always passed a few hours with her friends every morning in her boudoir in reading or conversation till the increasing heat of the day compelled her to lie down. It was Colonel Leslie's turn this morning to select an author for his niece's amusement, and while he read aloud the poetic effusions of the antique, but beautiful muse of Spencer, in his exquisite "Farie Queen," Gabrielle amused herself with netting, and Harold was challenged by Charlotte to a game of chess, from which his attention often wandered to contemplate the form before him, or listen to remarks indicative of those superior intellectual powers which had experienced no sensible diminution from sickness and suffering.

The canto was at length concluded, and Colonel Leslie retired to write some letters in an adjoining apartment. Charlotte soon after his departure protested

she was tired with the game, and quitted the room, under pretence of seeking for something she had lost; when Harold, no longer misled by a fastidious and mistaken principle of honour, and whose heart sighed to vindicate himself in the opinion of the being he so much venerated, so tenderly adored, again resumed the conversation which had been interrupted by their mutual emotions the preceding evening, and entered into a recital of those events connected with his inauspicious intimacy with Lady Marchmont, with which we are already acquainted, and which, without any formal accusation of art and seduction against Albina, was sufficiently explicit to exculpate the young and inexperienced victim of her wiles from much of the criminality attached to his past conduct. Tears of mingled pain and pleasure chased each other down the pale cheeks of Gabrielle while listening to this recital, and when he had concluded, "Oh. Harold!" she

mournfully exclaimed, "I have indeed greatly wronged you—but did you know the many miserable moments occasioned me by this error, you would, I think, forgive my involuntary injustice. Had my lot been, in reality, as felicitous as it was, alas! the reverse, the idea of that course I believed you were pursuing would have been sufficient to embitter all my bliss, and the report gave to every sorrow a keener pang. The aggravated details of Mr. Berrington, who seemed to take a cruel and malignant pleasure in conversing on the subject of your errors, incessantly tortured my feelings by the conviction they were calculated to awaken of your still persisting in the fatal infatuation which had undone you. I need not now recal to your remembrance our unexpected interviews in Glamorganshire and London, when your appearance and manners convinced me your mind was a prey to grief whose cause I dared not seek to penetrate; but I endeavoured to hope

that some share of this too evident dejection might be imputed to the influence of remorse upon a noble, though misguided nature, a hope which was apparently confirmed by the language you then used. Had you been more explicit, Harold, I should not now have to upbraid myself for having, by my reproaches, inflicted another pang on an already aching heart."

"On myself only, dearest Gabrielle," replied Harold, fervently, "should your condemnation rest; and on that romantic and mistaken principle of honour, which shrunk from a vindication of my own conduct at the expence of her who had been my destruction. But we will drop a subject so painful to us both; and never, if you regard my repose, let the name of Lady Marchmont be again exchanged between us."

"Then, ere we relinquish for ever the distressing theme, promise me, Harold,

to comply with the last request I shall now make you."

"Oh, name it, my angel friend," exclaimed Harold, with much emotion; "and though it were existence itself which you demanded, be assured of my compliance."

"Promise me, then, Harold, by our past tenderness and mutual sufferings, to fly from the seducing blandishments of the too-fascinating Albina. Promise me, if you again meet, to resist her fatal enchantments."

"Oh, do not doubt my resolution on this point," replied Harold, involuntarily sinking on one knee by the couch where Gabrielle was sitting. "The spell which once bound me to the enchantress has been long since dissolved. And here I call on every thing most sacred to witness my solemn promise never more to become subject to her power. Oh, believe me, Gabrielle, I have already drank too deeply

of the bitter cup of remorse, to tempt again the noxious and revolting draught."

"It is enough, Harold," replied Gabrielle; "I am satisfied. Almighty God," she added, clasping her hands together, as she spoke, and raising her tear-fraught beautiful eyes to that Heaven whose succour she implored, "hear him, I beseech Thee, and strengthen him to fulfil the resolution now taken in thy sacred presence!"

She paused—exhausted by the energy with which she had spoken, and a paler hue stole o'er her sunken cheek. Harold, alarmed, was flying for assistance, but was withheld, by a motion from Gabrielle not to leave her; and, sustaining her languid frame in his arms, he watched, with acute anxiety, her changing countenance, in momentary expectation of her fainting. She soon, however, revived, but appeared too much exhausted for any farther conversation: and, on her expressing a desire to be alone, Harold

retired, with an intreaty, that she would endeavour to obtain a short repose ; and, in the solitude of his own apartment, he gave a free indulgence to those feelings and reflections, which this morning's incidents had awakened in his mind.

We will not dwell minutely on the melancholy hours which were passed by Lord Harold in watching the gradual close of an existence a thousand times more precious to him than this own ; but never had the lovely and highly-gifted Gabrielle Montgomery, in the full bloom of beauty and of talent, so strongly excited his admiration and tenderness, as the patient interesting being, whose last hours now presented a scene which even angels might have viewed with approbation.

It was not one of Gabrielle's opinions, that a cold and superstitious observance, at stated periods, of certain outward and ceremonious forms, was the only requisite preparation for that awful moment,

which is alike inevitable to all. A life of uniform piety and virtue, which had been spent with a constant reference to that important moment, diffused in the recollections it imparted, a peaceful serenity to its closing scene; and, with due allowances for the listlessness and languor attendant upon a daily increasing malady, the same innocent pursuits, the same rational amusements which had charmed and occupied her in the days of health and activity, still continued to entertain and engage Mrs. Berrington at this period of her existence. She was still able to derive pleasure from the society of those she loved—from the beauties of nature, that noble and never-failing source of enjoyment to the well-regulated mind; and exempted, by a beneficent Providence, from acute and continual suffering, her heart expanded in gratitude to that Power who had shed so many comforts over the last hours of her life, while she looked forward to its final scene, not

merely as a termination of existence, but as the commencement of a new state of being, in which she should still experience a continuance of the same bountiful goodness and protecting care.

But, while Gabrielle was thus tenderly solicitous, by her own fortitude and submission to the will of Heaven, to soften the pangs sustained by her lamenting friends, the eye of affection beheld with feelings conceivable alone by those whose lot has subjected them to a similar sorrow, the gradual approaches of the grim tyrant towards his lovely unresisting victim. With secret anguish Harold observed the short walk become every day still shorter, the harp remained untouched, the book unopened, and even the reciprocal interchange of sentiments and feelings be productive of fatigue, too great to be long encountered. His heart bled at the agonizing conviction; nor could all the pious arguments, all the affecting motives for consolation, which were ad-

duced by Gabrielle, reconcile him to the dreadful idea of her impending fate.

Though not destitute of religious principles, Harold possessed only a small share of that lively and firmly-rooted belief, which, alike influencing the heart and conduct, teaches the sufferer to behold the hand of fatherly correction inflicting the chastisement he shrinks from, and, with the anguished feelings of hopeless and impatient despair, he struggled against the destiny he was unable to avert. Even the conviction that Gabrielle, by her marriage with Berrington, was for ever lost to him in this world, was unable to mitigate the pangs excited by the prospect of an eternal separation.

CHAP. XXX.

Nearly a month had elapsed since Harold's arrival in Sicily; when one evening, Gabrielle expressed a desire for a walk, which the beauty of the weather promised to render more than usually inviting. The colonel and Charlotte Berrington had rode over to Messina, at an early hour in the afternoon; and, accompanied only by Harold, whose arm sustained the feeble steps of the drooping invalid, she set out on her projected ramble.—After proceeding a short distance down "a winding alley green," they found themselves at the entrance of the rustic cemetery of the Villa di Marino, already mentioned in a former part of this history, and, hastily turning to her companion, Gabrielle requested him to accompany her into this sacred repository of the dead.

Harold complied, in silence; for the recollections this spot awakened, pressed with a painful emotion upon his heart, as he entered the place where he first beheld that being whose fatal spells had scattered poisons over the fair flowers of hope and happiness which had once strewed his path of life, now blasted and withered under their destructive influence. Gabrielle, who read in his eloquent countenance the ideas which passed rapidly through his mind, endeavoured to lead his attention from a theme of such distressing remembrance, and motioned him to a seat beside her, on the base of the monument erected to her deceased parents, on which she now turned her dewy eyes, with an expression which spoke volumes to the full heart of Harold; as it tacitly told him she was mentally anticipating the approach of that moment when she too should share their lowly resting place.

After remaining some time in silent contemplation of this interesting object, and strewing over the marble a few

flowers she had purposely gathered, Gabrielle, as if suddenly awakening from her apparent reverie, hastily addressed Harold, while she directed his observation to the prospect, which extended in rich luxuriance around them, now illumed by the soft radiance of the setting sun, whose rays, breaking through a dark and stormy cloud, glistened on the tall limes that waved above their heads.

"How many delightful recollections," exclaimed Gabrielle, "does this scene recal to my memory! Under those acacias, whose pensile foliage obscures our prospect of the Villa di Marino, my mother was wont to sit in the fine evenings of summer, while I danced before her to the sound of my tambarine. Yonder meadows have often witnessed my childish pastimes; nor is there a bower or a glade which is not fraught with some sweet and endearing recollection. Oh, my God!" she continued, raising her expressive eyes to Heaven, "how much reason have I to

thank thee for remembered blessings! how much reason to confide to thy goodness the destiny that awaits me in that state to which I am hastening!"

As Gabrielle ceased speaking she arose, and approaching the ruined chapel which stood at the other extremity of the cemetery, Harold soon lost sight of her graceful figure among the broken and picturesque arches of the dilapidated building. After waiting a few minutes in expectation of her return, he began to feel uneasy, and hastily advanced toward the spot where she had disappeared, when, on reaching the ivy-mantled entrance, an emotion of reverential awe induced him to pause, while his eager gaze was fixed upon the form of Gabrielle, whom he beheld in an attitude of devotion before the ruined altar, her hands folded together, and her eyes earnestly bent upon the moss-covered and broken cross which it supported.

Start not, gentle reader! Gabrielle was

no Papist, but she entertained a due respect for the sacred symbol of the Protestant as well as of the Catholic faith, nor did she believe the prayer would be less acceptable to Heaven, because it was offered up at the shrine which had witnessed the pious orisons of the sincere though mistaken votary of a less sublimated faith.

Deeply impressed by the image of piety and loveliness before him, Harold softly approached, and reverently bent beside her, while his heart fervently responded the petitions silently aspirated by this idol of its affections. In a few moments she arose, and on beholding Harold, whose expressive countenance confessed his secret feelings, a smile of soft complacency stole over her beauteous face, and extending her hand to him, she repeated, in a low voice, those memorable words—

"Nos cœurs repondent encore."

Harold could not speak; but he pressed the hand he had taken to his heart, and with eyes swimming in tears followed her from the ruined building.

On re-entering the cemetery, they beheld the colonel and Miss Berrington, who had come to meet them on returning from their ride; and the party were slowly proceeding home, when a vivid flash of lightning, immediately followed by a tremendous peal of thunder, gave the signal of an approaching storm, which had been lowering for some time in the western horizon.

At every period of her life a similar convulsion of Nature had been too much for Gabrielle's nerves, and, shuddering and pale, she now clung to Colonel Leslie, who, assisted by Harold, supported, or rather carried her to the Villa di Marino, as the nearest place of shelter. It was at present uninhabited, except by an old woman well known to Mrs. Berrington, who had been left in charge of the build-

ing, who readily gave them admittance: and it was resolved they should there wait the termination of the tempest, which now commenced with terrific violence.

Seated by the windows of an apartment, formerly used as a library by the inhabitants of the Villa, our little party continued to watch its progress over the distant sea, whose dark waves were illumined by the vivid lightning, which sometimes seemed to involve its whole surface in a sheet of fire, and at others ran along the curled and foaming billows in lines of forked flame, while at every dazzling flash the face of Gabrielle was shrouded in her uncle's bosom, who supported her trembling frame in his arms.

The evening closed in gloom and tempest, and the feelings of the group assembled in the library were in unison with the surrounding scene, as they sat silent and sad, each one apparently absorbed in their own reflections.

Those of Harold acquired additional

bitterness from his present situation; and every survey of Gabrielle, in whom he fancied he could discern a very striking alteration since they quitted the cottage, served to augment the oppression of his spirits. The alteration remarked by Harold was, in fact, not merely imaginary, the violent change produced by the tempest in the atmosphere had been attended by sudden and fatal effects on the languid frame of Gabrielle, who appeared so completely exhausted, that the colonel at length proposed, if they could obtain any accommodations, to remain all night at the Villa, from whence they might on the morrow return to the Cottage at as early an hour as they thought proper.

To this plan no objection was made by Gabrielle, and the old woman was accordingly summoned, who readily acquiesced in the proposal of the colonel to furnish them with beds, and, at his request, immediately spread a table with such frugal but wholesome fare as the

house afforded, to which she added a bottle of excellent wine and a profusion of fruit, with which the garden of the Villa was amply supplied. After a slight repast, the ladies withdrew to the chamber prepared for them, and about midnight, when the storm abated, Colonel Leslie likewise retired; but Harold, who was not disposed to sleep, continued in the library, and lost in reflection, listened to the receding thunder as it rolled awfully away, till all was hushed in silence, when flinging himself upon a sofa he gradually sunk into a slumber.

His sleep, however, was of that broken and unquiet kind in which realities and chimeras are confounded together; and the crude disjointed images which occupy the imagination take their colouring from recent events or actual objects, that operate upon the senses without dissipating repose. The scenes of the preceding day again passed before Harold, attended with all those incongruous and inconsis-

tent circumstances, which frequently accompany the dreams of uneasy slumber.

Suddenly, the visionary objects of his sleeping fancy assumed a more regular and decided form, and supposing himself in the situation in which he actually then was, he fancied the door which led from the library into the gardens, was gently opened, and a figure clad in white and flowing robes, resembling Gabrielle, entered the apartment; who, on beholding him, seemed to start with surprise; then softly approaching the sofa where he lay, remained for some time in an attitude of fixed and earnest contemplation.

He attempted to rise and address her, but the powers of speech and motion seemed suspended; and he continued, he thought, silently to survey the form of Gabrielle, for such he was now convinced it was; when, after gazing upon him for an interval, whose continuance he was unable to interrupt by any perceptible mark of recognition, he beheld her kneel

beside the couch, while with folded hands she appeared to murmur a prayer, of which he could not perfectly distinguish the purport; then suddenly rising, she bent over him as he lay, and he distinctly felt the soft pressure of her lip upon his own. The touch awoke him, and starting up, he perceived by the dim light of an half extinguished lamp which was burning in the chimney, the form of his visionary slumbers standing a few paces from the sofa; but ere recovered recollection enabled him to frame a mode of address it had disappeared; and, but for the sound of the closing door, and the waving of a white robe as it passed rapidly along, he would have believed himself still under the influence of his supposed dream.

For some moments after the departure of his mysterious visitant, a thrilling sensation of superstitious awe deprived Harold of all power of exertion; but reason soon dispelled the transitory

emotion, and snatching up the expiring lamp he hastened in pursuit of the figure, of whose actual appearance he no longer entertained a doubt. In crossing the hall, he again caught a glimpse of it ascending the stairs, and with quickened step proceeded forward; but ere he reached the top, his light was extinguished, and he hesitated whether or not to relinquish his design: an emotion compounded of something more than mere curiosity compelled him to proceed; and guided by the glimmering light which was partially admitted through its high arched windows, he entered one of those long corridors common in Italian mansions, where various passages branching off in different directions are calculated to embarrass and mislead a stranger, as Harold might with propriety be termed; since, though he had been so frequent a guest during the residence of the Marchmont family at the villa, he knew nothing of the building, which was extensive,

beyond that portion of it appropriated to visitors in general. He now stood uncertain which way to pursue, when the sound of a closing door caught his ear, and hastening forward in the direction from whence it seemed to come, he proceeded down a long and winding passage, at the termination of which was a door, which he found fastened, apparently by a spring within.

Every effort to open it was ineffectual; and relinquishing his adventure in despair, Harold slowly turned away, and attempted to regain the stair-case, with an intention of again proceeding to the library. But unacquainted with the intricacies of the different passages, he soon became completely bewildered; and having at length, by groping along the walls, discovered an entrance into a large apartment, he flung himself upon a seat, determined to remain there till the increasing light should enable him to retrace back the way he had come.

More than an hour had been passed by Harold in this situation, when the moon breaking through the dark clouds which had hitherto obscured its lustre, shone full into the apartment, and by discovering to him a door opposite the spot where he was sitting, again revived the hope of being extricated from his present unpleasant dilemma.

Hastily unclosing it, he found himself in an oratory, and as he snatched a transient glance within, every other consideration was absorbed, when, extended upon the floor, her head resting upon the step of the altar, and habited in the same dress as that in which he had recently fancied he beheld her, the form of Gabrielle met his astonished gaze. A book of devotion remained open on the altar, near which a taper was still burning, and the moon beams fell strongly upon her countenance, as, with arms folded on her bosom, she lay apparently in a profound sleep ; and, but for the drapery, which enveloped her figure, and the

dark luxuriant ringlets which had escaped from the confinement of her head dress, she might have been taken for a statue, so perfect was the delusion her appearance created, the silvery rays which gleamed upon her face and hands, giving them an exact resemblance to the purest Parian marble.

Petrified with surprise, Harold surveyed her for some moments, when, fearful of the consequences which might ensue to Gabrielle in her present delicate state of health, from a longer continuance in her present situation, he endeavoured by a movement which occasioned a slight degree of noise, to awaken her from her dangerous slumber. Alarmed at finding the attempt ineffectual, he then ventured to address her ; but Gabrielle still continued motionless, and believing she had fainted, Harold hastily approached and took her hand. Its cold and death-like touch seemed to congeal the tide which circulated in his veins, and seized with a sudden and involuntary terror, he called

aloud for assistance, while he remained rooted to the spot where he stood, as immoveable, though not as void of perception, as the form before him.

His cries soon awakened the colonel, and Miss Berrington, who rushed half dressed into the apartment, followed by Nannetta and her daughter, whose repose they had likewise dispelled. A few words from Harold explained the scene before them; and on conveying the inanimate form of Gabrielle to the next room, it was too soon perceptible that the pure spirit which it had once enshrined, was fled for ever. The anguished exclamations of those around first conveyed to Harold an idea of the event, and an enquiry of "Is she dead?" burst from his trembling lips, as Colonel Leslie again entered the oratory, where delicacy had retained the former while the usual remedies were applying to effect the recovery of Gabrielle. Colonel Leslie was unable to reply, but he mournfully shook his head, in token that all was over.

"She is not dead! she cannot be dead!" frantically exclaimed Harold; and breaking from the hold of the colonel, who ineffectually sought to detain him, he rushed from the oratory into the adjoining apartment, where the remains of the lovely Gabrielle had been placed upon a bed, with Charlotte and Nannetta seated weeping beside them.

Convinced beyond the possibility of a doubt, that she was indeed gone for ever, Harold gave way to an agony of despair, succeeded by a stupor, in which he suffered them, without resistance, to remove him from the bed, (on which he had thrown himself in the first paroxysms of his grief by the lifeless form of his soul's idol,) and conduct him to another chamber; where, under the effects of a powerful opiate administered by direction of the tender and considerate colonel, he lost in a temporary oblivion the sense of his present wretchedness.

CHAP. XXXI.

Absorbed as he was in sorrow for his own irreparable loss, Colonel Leslie forgot not the situation of his unhappy young friend, and repaired to his apartment as soon as he had heard that he had risen. He found him, though deeply dejected, more composed than he had been when they last met; but he would not now comply with the earnest request of Harold to accompany him to Gabrielle's chamber. "At present, my lord," he said, "you are not sufficiently recovered from the shock we have mutually sustained, to encounter such a trial to your feelings. In the evening, if you desire it, I will promise you my compliance. No opposition, Harold," he continued, perceiving him about to speak; "I cannot, I think, so well testify my affection for my departed angel, as by my anxious

concern for one she so tenderly regarded. By the memory of Gabrielle then, I conjure you to comply with my request."

At that name, Harold submitted himself to the directions of his friend, and a long interval of silence was interrupted by the former enquiring of the colonel, "When they were to leave the Villa di Marino?"

"Not till after the last sacred duties are paid to the remains of my darling," answered he, in an accent of assumed calmness. "The owner of this mansion was an intimate friend of her mother's, to whom I have written on the subject, and a few days will supersede the necessity of our longer stay. I say *ours*, as you will not, I trust, think of quitting us."

Harold readily promised he would not; and the conversation now recurring to the melancholy event of the preceding night, he related in a more particular manner to the attentive colonel, the extraordinary

circumstance which had led to the discovery of Gabrielle in the oratory where she had expired.

Superstition would probably have been inclined to attach something supernatural to the visionary, or waking dream which had visited him, but the minds of both the colonel and Lord Harold were too enlightened to be subjected to the influence of imaginary terrors, and they mutually agreed in believing that the disturber of his repose was Gabrielle herself; who, oppressed by the heat of the night, had probably risen from her couch to inhale the fresh air of the garden, and being well acquainted from her long residence at the Villa with every part of the building, had returned to her apartment through the library, where the unexpected sight of Harold had produced the scene which had appeared as a dream only to his half awakened faculties, still influenced by the effects of a perturbed and broken slumber.

That she should wish to avoid a discovery under such circumstances, was not surprising to those who were so well acquainted with her nice and delicate sense of propriety, and this at once accounted for her hasty and precipitate flight; but her dress, which was different from the one she had worn the preceding day, and was in fact only a *robe de chambre*, as well as the impression of footsteps in the walk beneath the windows of the library, clearly demonstrated that she had actually been there.

Over the rest the hand of death had now thrown an impenetrable veil; but from the evident change which had taken place after her return to the Villa, it was probable that Gabrielle was aware of her approaching dissolution, and her innate pity might have prompted a wish of breathing out her innocent soul in supplication to that Being whom in life she had reverenced, and in death confided in. From the confusion incident to such a

scene, the account which had been given by Harold to those whom his calls for assistance had attracted to the oratory was but little attended to, and it was mutually resolved that no further notice should be taken of the subject, which the surviving friends of Gabrielle did not wish should excite the conjecture or discussion of the curious and idle, of which in every place there is a proportion to be found.

In the evening Colonel Leslie, as he had promised, accompanied Harold to take another view of that being whose image since the moment they had first met had never been banished from his heart, where, amidst all its wanderings, it had still retained the supremacy.

With trembling steps he now approached the spot where the beauteous form of Gabrielle was deposited in its last receptacle, arrayed in spotless white, and decorated, according to the national custom, with a profusion of flowers—fit

emblems of her they ornamented. No lowering tempest now obscured the pure azure of the Heavens, irradiated by the mild splendors of the setting sun, whose rays, gleaming through the stained windows of the adjoining oratory, the door of which was thrown open, gilded the pale yet seraphic features of Gabrielle, to whom might justly have been applied the beautiful description given of his Medora by our inimitable bard:—

"In life itself she was so still and fair,
That death with gentler aspect withered there;
And the cold flowers her colder hand contained,
In that last grasp as tenderly were strained
As if she scarcely felt, but feigned a sleep,
And made it almost mockery yet to weep:
The long dark lashes fringed her lids of snow,
And veiled—thought shrinks from all that lurk'd below—
Oh! o'er the eye death most exerts his might,
And hurls the spirit from the throne of light!
Sinks those *dark* orbs in that long last eclipse;
But spares as yet the charm around her lips—
Yet, yet they seem as they forbore to smile
And wished repose—but only for a while."

With the fixed and tearless gaze of

agonized despair Harold bent over the lifeless form in which all his hopes of earthly happiness had once been centered.

"Yet, wherefore," he mentally exclaimed, "should I wish to recal thee? To me thou wert for ever lost; and, if as we are taught to hope, there is a reward for the righteous, thou art now enjoying a recompence for thy past sufferings, in a world far better suited to thy pure exalted virtues, than that from whence thou art now gone for ever. Oh, Gabrielle! beloved Gabrielle! why am I doomed to survive?"—And the first tears he had shed since the moment of her death, now burst from the eyes of Harold, and bedewed the pale cheek of the unconscious slumberer. Those of Colonel Leslie flowed profusely, and taking the arm of his unhappy young friend, he attempted to lead him away.

"One moment more!" he exclaimed, "and I will obey you:" and after remain-

ing a short interval intently gazing upon the countenance of the lovely, ill-fated Gabrielle, while his own silently confessed those feelings which language would have proved inadequate to pourtray, he imprinted a fervent and lingering kiss upon her icy lips, and, like the despairing lover of Medora, the fond, unhappy Conrad,

"He dried them to depart
In helpless—hopeless brokenness of heart;"

nor could the soothings of friendship, or the suggestions of reason on the inefficacy of his grief, assuage those pangs for which Nature has provided only one effectual balm—the sublime truths and cheering consolations of religion.

The rigid tenets of that faith which denominated Gabrielle an heretic, would have denied the last sacred duties to her remains, enjoined alike by nature and decency; but the chaplain of an English regiment, then at Messina, who was known to Colonel Leslie, and had been

an occasional visitor at the Cottage di Fiore, offered to perform the funeral ceremony, which, to avoid interruption, was conducted with the utmost privacy; and at the lone hour of midnight the all that now remained of the young and lovely Gabrielle was consigned to its kindred earth, attended only by the sorrowing friends who had been the sad spectators of her lingering and early fate, and the few domestics who accompanied them from England. No studied display of pomp marked her obsequies, nor substituted the ostentatious parade of grief for its affecting reality.

The faint and misty light of a waning moon, and the glare of the torches borne by some soldiers of his regiment, who had attended Mr. G. from Messina, betrayed the tears which bedewed the pale countenances of the surrounding group, and the solemn, universal stillness which reigned was only broken by the voice of the chaplain, as he impressively read the

sublime and affecting service, appointed by our church for its departed members, interrupted at intervals by the audible sobs of the spectators, or the sudden blast sweeping over the dark limes which waved above the monument, now destined to close over the last of the Montgomeries.

Supported by his sympathizing and considerate friend, Lord Harold was collected, and apparently calm, during the performance of the solemn ceremony; but, at the moment when the yawning grave received the lifeless form of her who had been dearest to him on earth, his fortitude at once forsook him, and he sunk to the ground without sense or motion. With recovered perception he found himself in bed in the apartment he usually occupied at the cottage di Fiore; and, from the state of extreme debility to which successive faintings had reduced him, it was some days before he was able to leave it, and many more elapsed, ere

he could again join the colonel and Charlotte in that domestic circle which was now bereaved of her who had constituted its chief delight and ornament.

With a noble forgetfulness of self, they mutually sought to console and enliven the unhappy Harold, whose first violence of grief had given place to a kind of torpid dejection, which did not vent itself in outward expressions, and appeared inaccessible to the usual sources of consolation. The sorrow of Colonel Leslie and Charlotte found relief—the one in conversing of, the other in weeping for, the lost object of their tenderness. That of Harold was silent, and seemed to seek concealment. The name of Gabrielle scarcely ever escaped his lips, but, like the miser o'er his hoarded gold, his soul clung to her dear remembrance, and he loved to indulge in secret that luxury of woe, which would be ill exchanged to the heart of sorrowing sensibility, for all the gaudy and unsubstantial pleasures, in

which affliction too often seeks an antidote to its sufferings.

To remain in a place where every object could not fail of reviving the most distressing remembrances, was extremely painful to the feelings of Colonel Leslie; and, on the arrival of a letter from Berrington, in answer to the one in which he had been informed of Gabrielle's decease, expressive of a greater degree of regret and compunction than the colonel had expected, the latter proposed to Harold their immediate return to England.—Though his own wishes might probably have induced him still to continue in Sicily, he yielded to the arguments of his friend, which forcibly represented the claims his mother had upon his duty and attention; and the necessary arrangements completed, it was finally resolved, that Harold should accompany the colonel and his fair charge as far as Falmouth, from whence they were to set off immediately for town, while he proceeded himself into Wales.

Dejected, as he already was, the melancholy which oppressed him seemed to acquire a still darker shade, as the moment approached, which was to tear Harold from the spot which enshrined all that was now left of his beloved and lamented Gabrielle; and Colonel Leslie, though anxious to quit a scene fraught with so many painful recollections, felt his affections no less forcibly attracted towards the land which contained her ashes. But he felt that life had claims and duties beyond those of mere selfish suffering and gratification. The country, in whose service he had acquired honour and fortune, possessed a just title to his private, as well as public exertion. His presence was necessary for the welfare of many who depended upon his patronage and benevolence for support and comfort. Some claims of friendship and gratitude remained to be fulfilled, which a life passed in vain and selfish lamentations over the tomb of her, whom Heaven

had mercifully removed from a scene of wretchedness, would not enable him to discharge. Though a soldier of fortune, whose days had, till lately, been passed in situations and circumstances not much calculated to promote the growth of serious impressions, the principles of religion, carefully implanted in early life, had never been eradicated from the mind of Colonel Leslie, where they had gradually sprang up into that rational and manly piety, which consoles without enervating the heart. It had sustained him under the direful blow which had torn away, at one stroke, his domestic happiness. It now assisted him to support a loss, as afflictive, though less severe; and, influenced by this silent monitor, he endeavoured to combat his grief, and discharge the duties still incumbent upon him.

But, religion, though she checks their excess, forbids not the sacred feelings of nature, and it was the indulgence of these feelings which, on the day preceding that

appointed for his departure, again led Colonel Leslie to review the spot where Gabrielle reposed.

His unwillingness to excite observation induced him to defer his purposed visit till the dim season, alike dear to love and sorrow, had enveloped every object in its dusky glooms: and, as he entered the rustic cemetery of the Villa di Marino, he heard the bell of a neighbouring convent tolling in slow and measured tones the hour of twelve. The moon, just risen above a clump of cypress, which stood opposite the monument, darted its silvery rays through the boughs of the limes by which it was overshadowed, and discovered to the colonel a dark figure reclining against its base: when, softly approaching, and concealing himself among the trees, he heard the midnight visitant pour forth the anguish of an oppressed heart, in a voice which announced him to be Harold; who, since the period of her decease, had been nightly

wont to repair to the tomb of Gabrielle at that hour—

"When the sons of Care and Pleasure sleep—
When only Sorrow wakes, and wakes to weep"—

to give an unrestrained indulgence to those expressions of grief which none but Heaven might witness. Colonel Leslie had himself loved, and the innate delicacy of his mind taught him to respect the sorrow in which he so deeply sympathized.

Unseen by Harold, he continued for some time to watch his motions, as, alternately influenced by tenderness and despair, he gave audible utterance to his feelings—then, suddenly rising, he saw him press his lips upon the tablet, on which was inscribed her name, at the same time exclaiming—"Oh, Gabrielle, farewell! Never shall I behold thee more! Never, perhaps, again behold the spot where thou art laid; but thine image

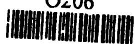
will not cease to warm my heart, till it becomes cold and insensible as thou art."

He paused—and imprinting another kiss upon the inanimate marble, turned away, and quitted the cemetery with lingering pace, and with his handkerchief raised to his eyes.

When his receding figure was no longer visible, Colonel Leslie advanced from his place of concealment to the last earthly bed of what had once been youth, and loveliness, and virtue; and, after shedding over it the sacred drops of piety and nature, he tore himself from the hallowed spot, and slowly retraced his steps to the Cottage di Fioré.

END OF VOL. II.

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